STATE of ILLINOIS
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

ILLINOIS
CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP
ANNUAL REPORT
2014

Illinois Department of Agriculture

BUREAU OF LAND AND WATER RESOURCES

Illinois Department of Agriculture

Bruce Rauner, Governor

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
State Fairgrounds • P.O. Box 19281 • Springfield, IL 62794-9281 • 217/782-2172 • TDD 217/524-6858 • Fax 217/785-4505

Dear Friend:

Something we are very proud of here in Illinois is that agriculture is our state's number one industry. Successful agriculture depends on healthy, fertile soil and clean water. Here in Illinois, protecting our soil and water resources voluntarily through programs like **Partners for Conservation** helps to maintain and improve the productivity of our soils; improve land values; reduce the cost of cleaning out road ditches, rivers, lakes and streams; reduces water purification costs and reduces the need for agriculture practice regulation.

The Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) serve as the local resource for technical assistance and conservation education efforts; and provide an irreplaceable link with all of the diverse conservation partners including private, state and federal efforts. Soil and Water Conservation Districts help to bring public and private efforts together at all levels whether it is working in a watershed basin to protect a drinking supply lake with city, county, state and federal cooperation or efforts to reduce nutrient loading in the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers that contribute to the gulf hypoxia.

The SWCDs are at the heart of the local delivery system for natural resource and conservation programs. There is no other entity that can deliver the services to the public and partner with so many agencies and organizations as effectively or efficiently as the Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

I applaud the work being done in each of the 97 Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts. I am equally impressed with the work being done by all of the conservation partners that you will see in this report, working cooperatively to protect the soil and water resources in Illinois.

Congratulations to the Soil and Water Conservation Districts and all our conservation partners on your accomplishments this year!!!

Sincerely,

Warren D. Goetsch

Warren D. Goetsch, P.E.
Acting Director, Illinois Department of Agriculture

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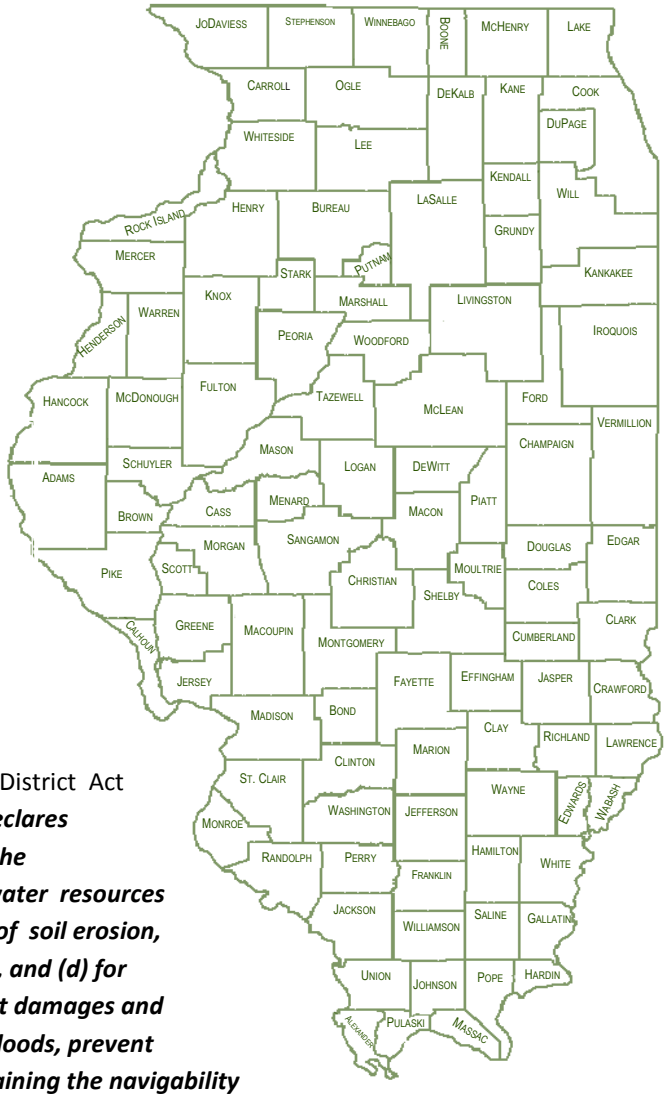
WELCOME / INTRODUCTION

Information has been compiled for the Illinois Conservation Partnership Annual Report from programs carried out in 2014. Partners include the Illinois Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Land and Water Resources (BLWR), Association of Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts (AISWCD), 97 local Soil and Water Conservation Districts, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) and U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Partner programs provide benefits in the areas of soil conservation and water quality in rural and urban communities, agricultural nutrient management, farmland protection, sustainable agriculture, mined land reclamation, wildlife habitat, and watershed planning and protection. Efforts also provide youth and adult environmental education and outreach, research and demonstration, and public information. Programs are generally directed to landowners and land managers using incentive based, voluntary approaches.

For more information on conservation programs and activities, contact your local Soil and Water Conservation District.



> *""The nation behaves well if it treats the natural resources as assets which it must turn over to the next generation increased, and not impaired, in value."*
> -Theodore Roosevelt

In 1937, the Illinois Soil and Water Conservation District Act was passed. It states, ***"The General Assembly declares it to be in the public interest to provide (a) for the conservation of soil, soil resources, water and water resources of this State, (b) for the control and prevention of soil erosion, (c) for the prevention of air and water pollution, and (d) for prevention of erosion, flood water and sediment damages and thereby to conserve natural resources, control floods, prevent impairment of dams, reservoirs, assist in maintaining the navigability of rivers and harbors, conserve wildlife and forests, protect the tax base, protect public lands and protect and promote the health, safety, and general welfare of the people of this State."***

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
BUREAU OF LAND AND WATER RESOURCES

The Bureau of Land and Water Resources (BLWR) implements the Department's natural resource conservation programs, including the Erosion and Sediment Control Program, the Soil and Water Conservation District Grants-In-Aid Program, the Partners for Conservation Fund (PFC) Program (formerly the Conservation-2000 Program), the Farmland Protection Program and the Mined Land Reclamation Program.

SWCD GRANTS-IN-AID

In Fiscal Year 2014, the BLWR distributed over $7.5 million in funds to Illinois' Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) for programs aimed at reducing soil loss, enhancing agricultural productivity and protecting water quality. SWCDs provide valuable technical assistance to rural and urban customers on a variety of natural resource issues, such as soil conservation, water quality protection, abandoned well decommissioning, nutrient management, sustainable agriculture, wetlands management, flood control, soil erosion control at urban construction sites, stream bank stabilization, land use, and site suitability for various uses and conservation education.

PARTNERS FOR CONSERVATION

The Partners for Conservation Fund (PFC) Program is a long-term, state-supported initiative to protect natural resources and enhance outdoor recreational opportunities throughout Illinois. Several state agencies share responsibility for the administration of the PFC Program. The Illinois Department of Agriculture oversees the agriculture resource enhancement portion of the program, consisting of sustainable agriculture grants, conservation practices cost-share, streambank stabilization and restoration, water well decommissioning and nutrient management.

The following conservation projects were completed across Illinois under the PFC Program in Fiscal Year 2014:

- 297 Conservation Structures
- 85 Water Well Decommissioning Projects
- 12,845 Linear Feet of Streambank Stabilization

In February of 2014, the Department partnered with other agencies and organizations to hold a statewide conference on cover crops. The conference provided practical information that agricultural producers can apply to farming operations on the use of cover crops.

FARMLAND PROTECTION

The BLWR administers Illinois' Farmland Protection Program under the auspices of the Illinois Farmland Preservation Act. The Act requires state agencies to provide written notice to the Department of Agriculture of development projects (e.g., highways, airports, facility planning areas, enterprise zones and wildlife habitat acquisition proposals) that will lead to farmland conversion. The The Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA) works with the sponsoring agency to minimize the

anticipated farmland conversion impacts. During the year, 210 projects were reviewed for compliance with the Farmland Preservation Act.

The BLWR continued to work with various utility companies to negotiate Agricultural Impact Mitigation Agreements (AIMAs). These documents help to mitigate the many agricultural impacts that result from the construction of large cross country oil/natural gas pipelines as well as 345 kV electric transmission line projects. Other detailed project reviews for the year included rural water line distribution and water treatment plant improvements; emergency levee restorations; enterprise zone expansions; and hazard mitigation projects to buy out previously developed residential areas subject to continual flooding to then remain as perpetual open space.

Bureau personnel also provided technical assistance to landowners and local units of government wishing to develop farmland protection programs. Since most projects that convert agricultural land are private sector actions, local farmland protection programs are critical to farmland protection success across Illinois. Specifically, the Department helps on the development of Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Systems (LESA) and Agricultural Areas under the Agricultural Areas Conservation and Protection Act, both of which can help to guide non-agricultural development in a manner that protects farmland from needless conversion. As of December 2014, there were 39 county LESA Systems and 55 Agricultural Areas with 116,887 acres in 23 counties in Illinois.

MINED LAND RECLAMATION

As provided by an agreement with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources - Office of Mines and Minerals, the BLWR reviewed 15 (5 new and 10 revisions) coal mine permit applications to help facilitate the reclamation of agricultural land affected by coal mining operations. The IDOA also tests crop yields at reclaimed agricultural land sites to ensure that pre-mining productivity levels have been restored. A total of 135 fields covering 2,954 acres of reclaimed ground were tested for crop yield success during the year.

COMMUNITY GARDEN

The Community Garden, located in the interior of the State Fairgrounds' mile race track, continued to be a major success in 2014. It was sponsored by the Illinois Department of Agriculture, University of Illinois Extension (U of I Extension), Illinois State University, the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Rupp Seeds and Syngenta. The Department offers the opportunity for gardeners to obtain up to two 12 foot x 12 foot plots for $20 each to use for the season. The Department supplied a variety of seed samples for gardeners' use, the needed water, compost and hand tools to help contribute to the success of the garden.

The Community Garden opened again in early April 2014. There were a total of 175 plots requested by 114 gardeners. Many of the gardeners signed up for the Plant a Row for the Hungry Program.

The Community Garden had many visitors throughout the year from individuals and groups including schools, media and the Master Gardener's Garden Walk.

EDUCATION

Education is an important component of all of the Department's programs and the services offered to constituents. When discussing education, it is often assumed that educational programs are designed exclusively for youth. Actually, the Department offers programs to all Illinois citizens.

The Department's Henry White Experimental Farm near Belleville offers numerous education opportunities. The farm essentially serves as an outdoor laboratory for sustainable agriculture and the conservation of natural resources in general. The farm has 94 acres containing agricultural crops, wetlands, evergreen and deciduous groves, restored prairie and wildlife habitat. Research conducted on the farm involves conservation projects for corn and soybeans, prairie, wetlands and woodlands. Sixty-five of the farm's 94 acres are devoted to the cultivation of crops, mainly corn and soybeans, which demonstrate various sustainable agriculture practices. In addition to providing valuable research information for farmers, the site also hosts local groups where specialists explain how practices showcased at the farm benefit the environment.

The Bureau provides public educational opportunities at Watershed Park, located at the Illinois State Fairgrounds. Watershed Park is an interactive educational exhibit about water quality protection. Featured in the park are numerous exhibit stations where the public learns about water quality issues in a watershed. Watershed Park is open during the Illinois State Fair and by appointment at other times during the year. In 2014, 4,970 individuals visited Watershed Park.

The Illinois Department of Agriculture sponsored a series of 3 one-day **Conservations Cropping Systems Seminars** to provide farmers with the latest information about soil conservation practices. The seminars were held on January 28 at the Civic Center in Mendota, February 27 at the Holiday Inn Convention Center in Mt. Vernon and March 13 at Heartland Community College in Normal . The seminars were designed to provide farmers with the latest information about soil conservation practices, with an emphasis on the value of cover crops to farming operations. Presentations also addressed soil health, crop nutrient efficiencies, water quality improvement techniques and no-till practices. Farmer panels shared information on their experiences with soil and water conservation practices, including cover crops. The total attendance for the 3 seminars was 423. This was an excellent turnout for the first year. The agricultural community is definitely interested in the adoption of best management practices, such as cover crops, to increase environmental protection (particularly water quality) and to enhance producer profitability. The 2015 Conservation Cropping Seminar dates and locations are January 27 in Sycamore, February 4 in Mattoon and February 18 in Macomb.

In 2014, the Department worked with landowners along interstates and major Illinois highways to begin a **Cover Crop Initiative** to establish 14 cover crop demonstration sites around Illinois to foster greater use of cover crops. In addition, the Department worked with soil and water conservation districts to establish 23 local cover crop plots. The cover crop Initiative will be able to expand in 2015 as a result of the cooperation and $30,000 grant assistance from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

ILLINOIS SOIL CONSERVATION TRANSECT SURVEY SUMMARY

Results of the 14th statewide Soil Conservation Transect Survey conducted in the spring and early summer of 2013 indicate Illinois producers preformed more tillage to plant their corn and soybean crops than in 2011, which was the last year the survey was conducted. Intensive tillage practices can bury crop residue and leave the soil surface more susceptible to erosion. The survey, initiated by the Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA), involved Illinois' 97 Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs), and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The survey measures progress in tillage trends that correlate to reducing soil erosion to "T" or tolerable soil loss levels statewide. The tolerable soil loss for most soils is between 3 and 5 tons per acre per year. This is the amount of soil loss that can theoretically occur and be replaced by natural soil-building processes. Reducing soil loss to "T" is essential to maintaining the long-term agricultural productivity of the soil and to protecting water resources from sedimentation due to soil erosion.

The Transect Survey provides a snapshot of the current status of soil conservation efforts in Illinois. Survey results provide data on the presence of conservation practices in each county and an estimate of remaining land treatment needs. Information on tillage systems and crop residue amounts is collected at 50,000 points across the state. Surveyors collect data on sheet/rill and ephemeral soil erosion.

After the survey is completed for each of the 100 counties in Illinois that conduct a cropland survey, the data is sent to the IDOA for analysis. Data for each county and the entire state is available on soil loss relative to "T", the presence of ephemeral erosion and tillage systems used to plant crops.

The 2013 Transect Survey (Table 1) results show 82.9% of the points surveyed were at or below "T". Although the 2013 results show less acres are being farmed below "T" than in 2011, this is only about 3.5% below the highest level of 86.5% recorded in 1998.

TABLE 1

RELATIVE SOIL LOSS BY "T" VALUE

YEAR	< "T"	1-2 "T"	>2 "T"	UNKNOWN
2013*	82.9	11.4	5.7	0
2011*	84.2	10.9	4.9	0
2009*	85.4	10.2	4.4	0
2006*	85.8	10.2	4.0	0
2004*	84.9	10.7	4.4	0
2002*	85.0	10.8	4.2	0
2001*	85.0	10.6	4.1	0.3
2000*	85.7	10.4	3.6	0.3
1999*	85.7	10.5	3.6	0.2
1998*	86.5	9.9	3.4	0.2
1997*	86.2	9.8	3.7	0.3
1996	76.2	14.8	6.4	2.6
1995	76.7	15.3	6.3	1.7
1994	74.1	16.7	7.1	2.1

PERCENT OF POINTS SURVEYED WITH RELATIVE SOIL LOSS BY "T" VALUES FROM 1994 THRU 2015.

*THE REVISED UNIVERSAL SOIL LOSS EQUATION (RUSLE) WAS USED TO ESTIMATE SOIL LOSS.

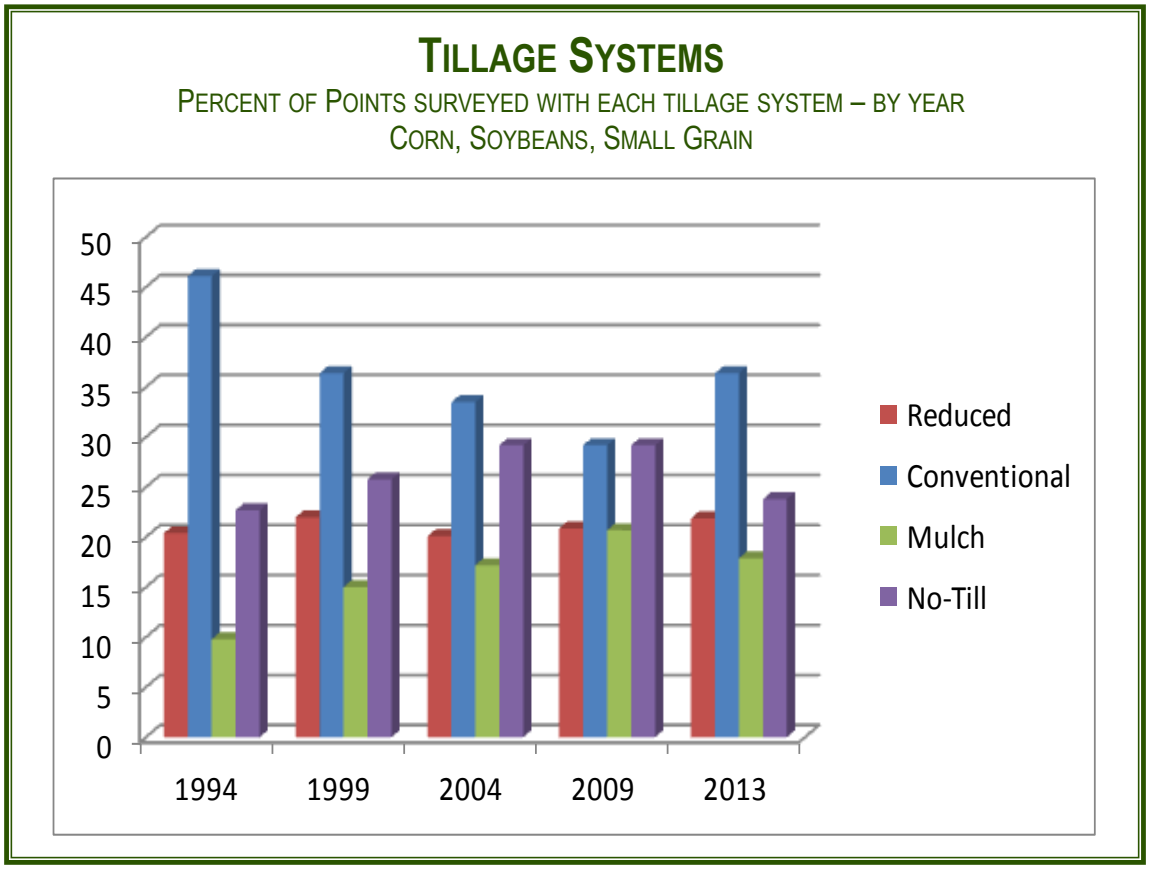
The 2006 survey showed about 17% of the corn acres were planted by no-till. The number slipped to 13% in 2009 and just under 11 percent in 2011. It appears that the decline has leveled off as the 2013 survey again recorded 11% of the fields were planted by a no-till system. Although mulch-till showed a reduction of almost 3% from 2011 to 16% in 2013, it is still about 3% higher than the amount recorded in 2006.

This year's survey showed a significant increase in the amount of tillage farmers used to plant soybean fields compared to previous years. No-till, which had increased every year from 28% in 1994 to 51% in 2006, has showed a steady decline over the past 3 surveys with this year's survey recording about 39% of the acres planted by a no-till system. Mulch-till acres have also declined in the past 2 years by 6%, with the 2013 survey recording just under 20% planted by a full-width tillage system that leaves 30% or more crop residue on the soil surface after planting.

Surveyors also identify fields in which ephemeral (gully) erosion has been observed in areas of concentrated surface water flow. Controlling this type of erosion requires structural conservation practices, such as grassed waterways or sediment retention basins in addition to conservation tillage. The 2013 survey recorded 20% of the fields experiencing ephemeral erosion, which was about the same amount observed in 2011.

Summary

Data received from this survey will assist in planning future conservation efforts. This information will be vital in helping Illinois' goal of reducing soil erosion and sedimentation and improving water quality to the extent possible. Additional information can be obtained by contacting the Bureau of Land and Water Resources or the local SWCD.



PARTNERS FOR CONSERVATION FUND PROGRAM

The Partners for Conservation Fund (PFC) Program is a long-term, state-supported initiative to protect natural resources and enhance outdoor recreational opportunities throughout Illinois. Several state agencies share responsibility for the administration of the PFC Program. The Illinois Department of Agriculture oversees the agriculture resource enhancement portion of the program, consisting of sustainable agriculture grants, conservation practices cost-share, stream bank stabilization and restoration, water well decommissioning and nutrient management.

The Legislature appropriated $7,500,000 in FY 2014 for the PFC Program for the Agriculture Resource Enhancement component of the PFC Program (SWCDs have 2 years to complete the installation of conservation practices). These funds are allocated to SWCDs through the Illinois Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Land and Water Resources. SWCDs promote the cost share programs and along with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) staff, provide technical assistance to landowners and managers. Assistance includes site inventorying, conservation planning, surveying, as well as design and practice layout. SWCDs prioritize cost share applications based on conservation benefits to include cost/benefit considerations. The following provides a description of the PFC Program components.

The **Conservation Practices Program** assists land users experiencing sheet and rill erosion exceeding "T" (tolerable soil loss level) or with ephemeral/gully erosion with the construction of conservation practices which help conserve soil, protect water quality and reduce flooding. Practices eligible include No-Till/Strip-Till, Cover Crops, Temporary Cover, Critical Area Planting, Filter Strips, Diversion, Grade Stabilization Structures, Grassed Waterways, Pasture and Hayland Planting, Terraces, and Water and Sediment Control Basins. Structural practices have a cost share rate of 60%, with agronomic practices cost shared on a cost per acre basis. Local SWCDs may have varying priorities and rates for certain practices.

15,892 tons is the amount of soil that was saved from the assistance of the PFC Program.
That's 795 loaded semi tractor-trailers!!

The **Nutrient Management Program** (NMP) provides incentives to eligible land users for nutrient management projects that minimize the transport of nutrient and pollutant load to surface and groundwater. Projects include soil testing, developing a nutrient management plan and implementing the plan for four years. SWCDs prioritize applications while considering geographic location, watersheds and soils. Technical Service Providers or SWCD staff may write the plans. Benefits may include a reduction in nutrients leaving the farm into nearby waters, better utilization of nutrients, a reduction in input costs and, in some cases, increased yields.

The **Well Decommissioning Program** (WDP) provides incentives to owners of abandoned water wells to properly decommission and seal the wells to reduce or eliminate the potential for groundwater pollution. Abandoned wells also pose health and safety concerns. Cost share dollars are available at a 60% cost share rate, not to exceed $400 per residential well and $750 for a high capacity well. SWCDs prioritize applications based on the risk potential posed by the well. Wells must be sealed according to applicable standards set forth by the local health department.

SUMMARY OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

A total of $527,622 from the PFC Program was spent on Erosion and Sediment Control Practices, Nutrient Management, and Well Decommissioning through March 23, 2015. The accomplishments for the Erosion and Sediment Control Practices (ESC) are shown in Table 2. In addition to the state's cost for installing these practices, the remaining cost of most practices was provided by the landowner.

The practices installed this year from PFC Program through the ESC benefited a total of 8,272 acres. Soil loss on these acres has been reduced to the tolerable soil loss level, saving soil productivity and protecting water quality. The average cost to the state for reducing or maintaining soil loss to tolerable levels was $63.50/acre. The cost to the state for soil saved was $42.51/ton.

There were a total of 84 wells sealed through the Well Decommissioning Program. The state's cost to seal the wells was $277 per well for a total amount of $23,235.

PARTNERS FOR CONSERVATION FUND PROGRAM RESOURCE ENHANCEMENT COMPONENTS	DOLLARS
Erosion & Sediment Control, Nutrient Management and Well Decommissioning Programs	649,000
Soil and Water Conservation District Grants	6,211,000
Sustainable Agriculture Grant Program	0
Streambank Stabilization and Restoration Program	125,000
TOTAL	***$6,985,000***

TABLE 2

PARTNERS FOR CONSERVATION FUND PROGRAM

Thru March 15, 2015

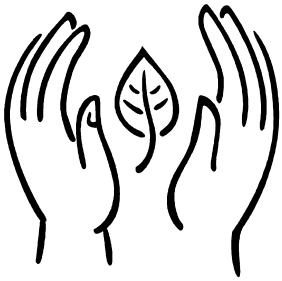
Conservation Practice	Projects	Acres Benefited	Tons Saved	Sediment Reduction	$/Acre	$/tons	Claims Summary *
Cover & Green Manure Crop	89	3,300	2,360	643	21.42	29.95	70,667
Critical Area Planting	4	26	81	35	263.73	83.39	6,746
Diversion	1	10	8	2	216.93	281.72	2,169
Grade Stabilization Structure	27	665	856	249	87.99	68.40	58,540
Grassed Waterway	57	1,796	3,451	947	69.27	36.05	124,414
Residue Management	1	39	178	67	43.43	23.61	4,203.06
Pastureland and Hayland Planting	9	101	1,218	344	147.77	12.25	14,919
Terraces	9	471	544	206	77.38	67.06	36,465
Water & Sediment Control Basins	70	1,773	2,042	730	113.79	98.77	201,712
Total	**271**	**8,370**	**12,502**	**3,875**	**$63.50**	**$42.51**	**$531,441.83**

*** The Claims Summary** represents total cost share dollars spent for practices.

Additionally, for most practices landowners contribute a minimum of 40% of the total cost of projects.

Partners For Conservation Fund Program

Special Projects



The Special Projects component of the Partners for Conservation Fund Program was first made available to SWCDs in FY 2008. This initiative was created for SWCDs to be able to cost share projects unique to a limited area or region of the state that would either provide for piloting new practices not on the state-wide docket or target specific practices or initiatives that are local priorities.

The Special Projects Fund allows the Department and SWCDs to address these needs without adding a long list of practices to the statewide docket that may only be used by a few SWCDs. Urbanizing SWCDs have emerging resource issues they deal with on a regular basis that are not addressed by the existing regular program which addresses rural soil erosion needs.

The cost share rate for most Special Projects is 60% unless the sheet and rill erosion is greater than twice the tolerable soil loss for the land on which a project has been installed. Projects installed on these higher soil loss sites could receive up to 70% cost share. The maximum total cost share amount available for an individual project is $10,000. However, there is no limit on the number of individual projects that SWCDs could apply for in a fiscal year.

Examples of potential pilot projects that SWCDs could apply for include, but are not limited to: stream crossings, shelterbelts, windbreaks, ecologically sensitive area protection – karst, urban gully restoration, retention pond buffers, rain gardens for storm water control, shoreline protection/restoration/stabilization, and heavy livestock use area protection.

Five project applications were submitted to the BLWR by SWCDs which were approved for cost share assistance totaling $20,383. The approved projects and the amount of cost share provided for these projects are listed below.

SWCD	Type of Project	Cost-share Dollars
Champaign	Shoreline Protection	$4,500
Jefferson	Heavy Use Area	$2,000
Kendall	2 Channel Ditch	$10,000
McLean	Shoreline Protection	$2,500
Union	Stream Crossing	$1,383

STREAMBANK STABILIZATION & RESTORATION

Streambank erosion is a natural process in all streams as water wears away the soil and rock that form their banks. Streams naturally and slowly establish a meandering course. Streambank erosion in Illinois has, however, been accelerated by land altering activities such as stream channelization and straightening, removal of stream side vegetation, construction of impervious surfaces and other activities that increase water flow and water velocity.

Streambank erosion is a serious threat to the land, water, plant, fish and other animal resources along many streams in Illinois. Streambank erosion can be contributed to loss or damage to valuable farmland, fish and wildlife habitat, buildings, roads, bridges and other public and private structures and property. Streambank erosion is a major source of sediments deposited in Illinois lakes, streams and backwater areas. It may contribute to as much as 30-60% of the downstream sediment load. Sediment reduces stream channel capacity which may increase flooding and streambank erosion and reduce the depth and holding capacity of lakes and reservoirs.

The Streambank Stabilization and Restoration Program (SSRP) has three primary objectives.

1. *Provide funding to construct effective, low-cost practices, such as rock riffles, stream barbs or stone toe protection at suitable locations.*
2. *Provide technical assistance to landowners interested in stabilizing an eroding streambank*.
3. *Distribute education materials on the affects of streambank erosion along with the practices available to stabilize the erosion through SSRP.*

The program provided cost-share funding assistance to qualified Illinois landowners for stabilizing or restoring severely eroding streambanks.

A total of 17 projects were constructed through the Illinois Department of Agriculture's SSRP by SWCDs. Streambank stabilization practices constructed with cost-share funds included bendway weirs, rock riffles, stream barbs, stone toe protection and vegetative techniques.

Cost-sharing for all eligible and approved construction expenses can not exceed 75%. The remaining 25% was the obligation of the landowner. Table 3 shows a summary of streambank projects completed.

TABLE 3

STREAMBANK STABILIZATION & RESTORATION PROGRAM

Summary of Projects Completed with SSRP Funds in 2014

5SWCD	Sediment Reduction	Nitrogen Reduction	Phosphorus Reduction	Feet of Bank	SSRP Fund Cost-Share
Clark	72	122	61	225	$6,750
Coles	41	82	41	160	$5,250
Crawford	612	1,224	612	1,200	$8,500
Cumberland	25	50	25	130	$3,900
Edgar	31	61	31	300	$8,500
Jackson	521	1,041	521	875	$8,500
Kendall	7	13	7	35	$379
Knox	4	9	4	50	$1,460
Lawrence	37	74	37	865	$8,500
Ogle	17	34	17	245	$6,150
Perry	113	226	113	360	$8,500
Pike	94	187	94	550	$11,173
Randolph	269	539	269	325	$8,500
Richland	74	148	74	250	$6,350
Saline	15	30	15	200	$4,230
Union	13	25	13	210	$4,500
Union	32	63	32	210	$4,000

WATERSHED PARK

Watershed Park is an interactive and educational exhibit with an emphasis on water conservation and protection. Approximately one acre in size, Watershed Park is located on the Illinois State Fairgrounds. The Department broke ground on May 3, 2001 to build Watershed Park. The Park opened on August 10, 2001 during the Illinois State Fair. Over 20,000 people visited Watershed Park the first 10 days it was open! Featured in Watershed Park are thirteen exhibit stations where the public can learn about water quality issues in a watershed. Soil conservation, urban storm water management, farm and home health and safety, integrated pest management, streambank protection, pasture management, wetlands and wildlife are among the topics covered. Visitors can enjoy a leisurely walk through the exhibits or sit under the shade trees. A new pervious pavement area of sidewalk was added in 2009.

A total of 4,970 State Fair goers enjoyed the Watershed Park interactive rainfall simulator and stream demonstrations, digging in the sand with toy backhoes and cheering on their duck in the duck races. In 2014, the Department also coordinated interactive presentations for the public during the Illinois State Fair on the green roof on top of the Department administrative building.

The 23rd annual Earth Stewardship Day was held May 7, 2014 on the Illinois State Fairgrounds in Springfield. This year's event included 859 4th grade students from 39 classes and 15 Sangamon County schools that registered. A total of 36 presenters provided six to seven scheduled interactive, hands on learning sessions on topics related to conservation, resource management, recycling, wildlife, water quality and others. Several of the stations were conducted in Watershed Park.

Watershed Park is open on an appointment basis for groups and schools to visit from May 1 through October 1, weather permitting. Please call (217) 782-6297 to schedule a tour of Watershed Park. We will need at least two weeks' notice to schedule groups of 25 or less and four weeks advance notice to schedule groups larger than 25.

Watershed Park is a cooperative effort between the **Illinois Department of Agriculture** and the **Illinois Environmental Protection Agency**. Additional major sponsors of Watershed Park include: the **University of Illinois**, **Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts**, **Partners for Agricultural Literacy**, **Archer Daniels Midland**, **Caterpillar**, **Monsanto** and **Syngenta**.

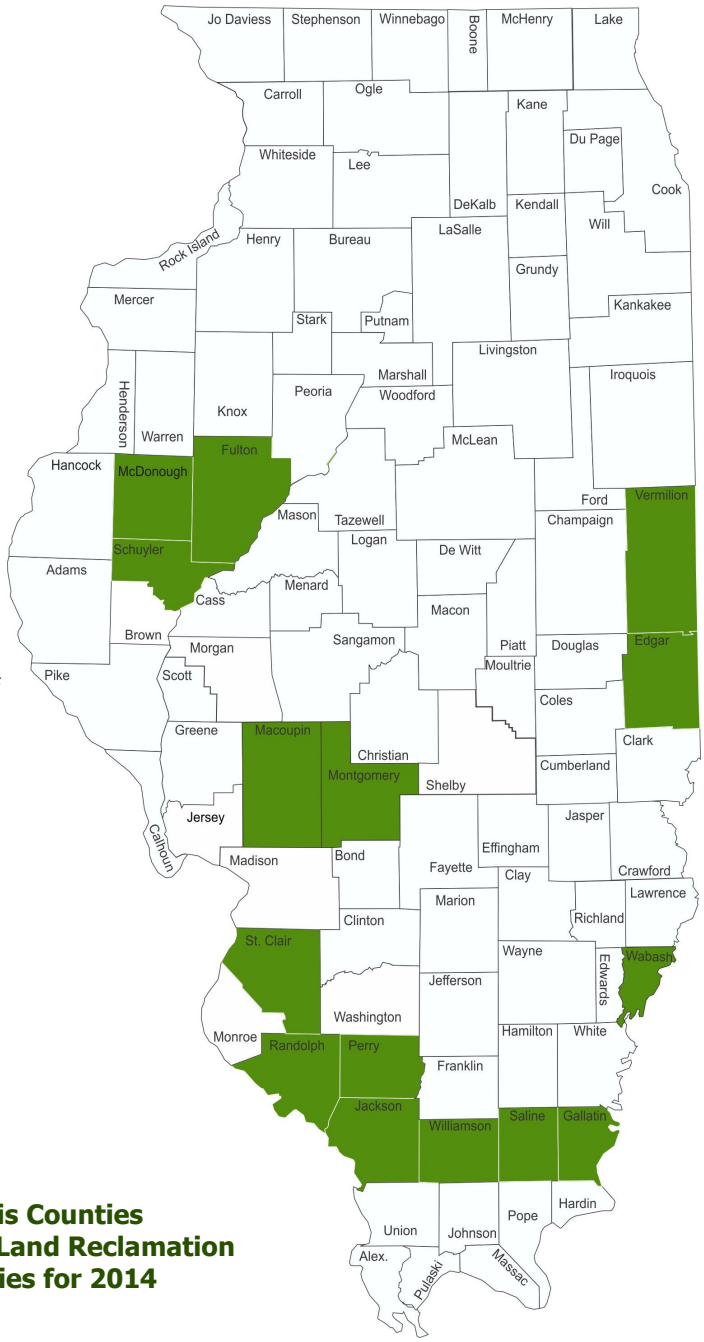
MINED LAND RECLAMATION PROGRAM

Under the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977, the coal mining industry is required to replace prime farmland soils to their pre-mining productivity levels. The Illinois Department of Agriculture is responsible for assessing the productivity capacity of reclaimed mine land.

The Agricultural Lands Productivity Formula was adopted in 1986. The formula is used on prime farmland soils, high capability land soils and soils that do not meet the criteria for either prime or high capability lands. The formula produces a yield standard that coal mine operators must achieve as evidence that mined land has been restored to pre-mining productivity levels.

In 2014, IDOA, in cooperation with enumerators from the Illinois Agricultural Statistics Service, sampled 42 corn fields (1,199 acres), 24 soybean fields (598 acres), 2 wheat fields (152 acres) and 67 hay fields (1,005 acres) for a total of 135 fields (2,954 acres) sampled as part of the proof of pre-mining productivity process. Hay fields are normally sampled multiple times during the growing season, thus each hay cutting is not counted as additional acres.

As provided by an agreement with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources—Office of Mines and Minerals, the BLWR reviews coal mining permit applications to help facilitate the reclamation of agricultural land affected by coal mining operations. A total of 15 coal mine permit applications were reviewed.



Illinois Counties With Mined Land Reclamation Activities for 2014

FARMLAND PROTECTION PROGRAM/CONVERSION REPORT

"The natural resources of Illinois - land, minerals, water and air – are both finite and fragile. In the absence of wise use and consistent management practices, these resources are threatened by irreversible damage or loss. Protection of Illinois' natural resources is essential to guard the public health, safety, and welfare, and to assure an adequate natural resources supply and quality for use and enjoyment by future generations."
Farmland Preservation Act, P.A. 82-945, § 5, effective August 19, 1982

The Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA) is authorized to administer the Farmland Preservation Act (505 ILCS 75/1 et seq.). The Act also requires the IDOA to report annually to the Governor and General Assembly on the amount of farmland converted to non-agricultural uses as a result of state action. The Farmland Conversion Annual Report identifies the number of acres of land purchased, converted or possessing the potential to be converted from agricultural uses on a fiscal year basis.

Table 4 contains the Illinois Department of Agriculture's Fiscal Year 2014 Farmland Conversion Annual Report as mandated by the Act (505 ILCS 75/1 et seq.). The Act requires state agencies to consider farmland conversion in the planning and execution of their programs and projects.

This report does not reflect the total land converted by actions of state agencies during that fiscal year. Certain activities that converted agricultural land are exempt from the IDOA's review and, therefore, are exempt from farmland conversion reporting for purposes of the Farmland Preservation Act. The actual timing of the conversion is at the discretion of the state agency that has acquired the land or it may indirectly occur as a result of state agency regulatory functions.

Farmland Conversion



Copies of the Farmland Conversion Annual Report can be found on the IDOA website at www.agr.state.il.us/Environment/LandWater or for additional information, call the Bureau of Land and Water Resources at 217-782-6297.

TABLE 4

FY 2014 Farmland Conversion Annual Report

Land Purchased or Affected Due to Actions of State Agencies

July 1, 2013 — June 30, 2014

State Agency	Total Acres	Crop-land	Pasture Land	Forest Land	Other*
Capital Development Board					
A. Schools	315	295			20
Commerce and Economic Opportunity					
A. DCEO/Com. Development Grants	331	281			50
B. CDAP Grants Public Infrastructure					
C. Enterprise Zones	1,165	400			765
D. High Impact Business (HIB)	277	277			
Environmental Protection Agency					
A. Facility Planning Area Boundary	0				0
Department of Natural Resources					
A. Division of Grant Administration	69				69
B. Office of Water Resources	1				1
C. Office of Realty & Environmental	1,064	363	188	440	73
D. Office of Mines & Minerals					
Department of Transportation					
A. Division of Aeronautics	1,073	391	5	545	132
B. Division of Highways	124+(1)	98+(1)	17	8	1
C. Division of Public and Intermodal Transportation	48	48			
Governor's Office of Management and Budget	0				
Illinois Commerce Commission	6,970	658	57	2,836	3,419
Department of Agriculture	0				
Total Acres	**11,437+(1)**	**2,811+(1)**	**267**	**3,829**	**4,530**

** Other includes old fields, urban land, water bodies, wetlands, brushland, prairie, farmsteads, mined land, abandoned railroad, embankments and ditches; use can be residential, commercial or industrial, etc.*

( ) *Indicates total acres of land purchased as permanent easements.*

AGRICULTURAL AREAS SUMMARY

The Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA), pursuant to the *Agricultural Areas Conservation and Protection Act (505 ILCS 5/20.1)*, is required to prepare an annual report to the General Assembly on the location and size of all Agricultural Areas (also known as Ag Areas) created, modified, or dissolved during the past year. A copy of the complete Act is available at our web site listed below.

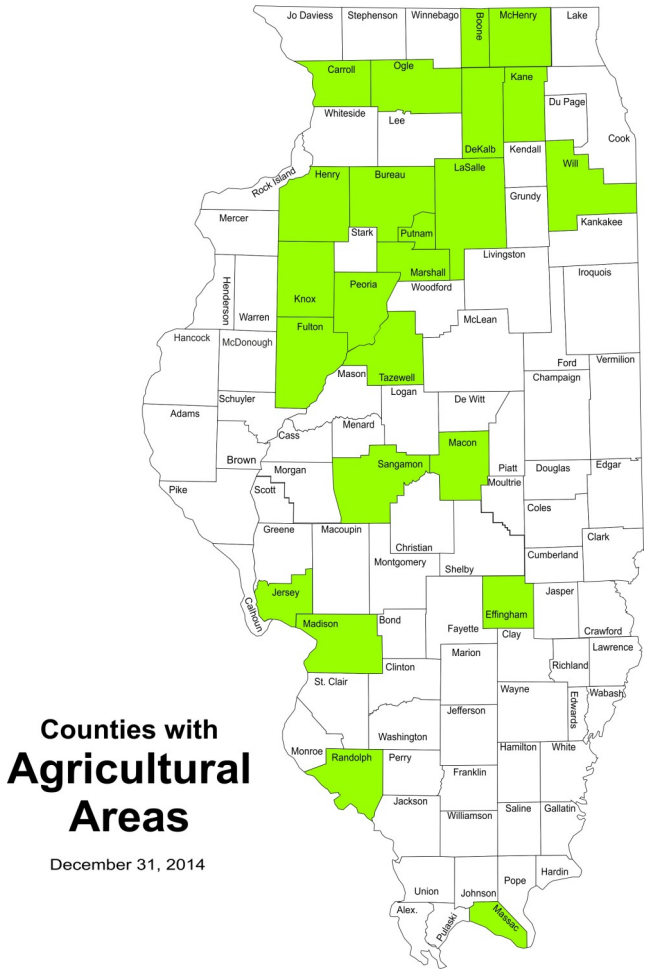
The Summary of Agricultural Areas lists the 23 counties with local county board approved Ag Areas. This chart itemizes the total number of Ag Areas in participating counties, along with their respective acres, and summarizes the total number of acres in approved Ag Areas throughout the state.

There weren't any changes in the state's agricultural areas for 2014. Currently, a total of 116,887 acres are enrolled in 55 Ag Areas in Illinois. Maps delineating the 55 Ag Areas in the 23 counties can be obtained by referring to the IDOA's Agricultural Areas Annual Reports, available from the IDOA website at www.agr.state.il.us/ Environment/LandWater.

For additional information, contact the Bureau of Land and Water Resources at 217/782-6297.

TABLE 5
SUMMARY OF AGRICULTURAL AREAS IN ILLINOIS
Calendar 2014

COUNTY	# OF AG AREAS	TOTAL ACRES
Boone	2	7,021
Bureau	2	4,374
Carroll	1	1,698
DeKalb	1	710
Effingham	1	615
Fulton	1	1,915
Henry	8	22,735
Jersey	3	14,279
Kane	1	575
Knox	1	1,735
LaSalle	5	5,396
Macon	1	1,693
Madison	2	2,677
Marshall	5	5,414
Massac	2	3,699
McHenry	9	20,796
Ogle	1	429
Peoria	3	2,549
Putnam	2	7,208
Randolph	1	6,903
Sangamon	1	377
Tazewell	1	3,620
Will	1	469
Total	**55**	**116,887**



VEGETATIVE FILTER STRIP ASSESSMENT LAW

CALENDAR YEAR 2013 REPORT

The Vegetative Filter Strip Assessment Law (35 ILCS 200/10-152), became effective on January 1, 1997. Under the law, qualifying property used as a vegetative filter strip is eligible to be assessed at a reduced rate. Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) have been given the authority for certifying that a parcel of property meets the requirements for a vegetative filter strip established under the law, for determining the size of the vegetative filter strip and for creating a conservation plan for the area occupied by the strip.

This report summarizes activities for calendar year 2014 related to implementation of the Vegetative Filter Strip Assessment Law, as reported by SWCDs, as well as the period for 1997 through 2012. It includes information that represents the final report submitted to the Illinois General Assembly by March 1, 2014, as directed by the Act.

- 58 Landowners Certified
- 12 SWCDs providing Certification
- 98 Vegetative Filter Strips Certified
- 369 Acres of Vegetative Filter Strips Installed

2014 Activities
SWCDs reported advertising the Act to landowners in one or more of the following ways:

- District Newsletter – 20 SWCDs
- Direct Mailings to Landowners - 7 SWCDs
- Media Promotion – 10 SWCDs
- One-On-One Landowner Contact - 51 SWCDs
- Other - 19 SWCDs

The following table provides a comprehensive overview of activities for the establishment of vegetative filter strips under Public Act 89-606.

ESTABLISHMENT OF VEGETATIVE FILTER STRIPS (1997-2014)

	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005-1997	TOTAL
SWCD CERTIFIED	12	8	10	12	15	21	20	24	28	488	626
OWNER CERTIFIED	58	43	59	70	85	157	318	142	236	8,073	8,883
FILTER STRIPS INSTALLED	98	96	119	175	142	207	317	280	361	11,124	12,821
ACRES INSTALLED	369	262.1	417	427.69	415.84	1,322.8	1,420.66	1,536.5	1,848.3	63,700.3	75,142.39

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE PROGRAM

The purposes of the Illinois Sustainable Agriculture program listed in the 1990 Sustainable Agriculture Act:

"to identify Ag practices that maintain productivity and minimize environmental degradation; relate overland runoff, sediment transport, stream flow quality and quantity, and groundwater quality and quantity to specific Ag practices; integrate and coordinate experimental field and on-farm research and educational efforts of cooperating individuals, agencies, institutions, and organizations; test and refine alternative approaches to organizing and conducting on-farm research and demonstration projects; test the organizational approach of joint farmer specialist development of a computerized decision support system as an approach to fostering sustainable agriculture; Develop an expert system to identify what tillage and crop management system should be used in a particular field; test the usefulness of the existing conservation tillage knowledge base in making tillage system selection, implementation, and management decisions, and to identify the most critical needs for research and education programs related to sustainable agriculture. "

Due to budget shortfalls there were no competitive grants funded in FY 2014.

The Sustainable Agriculture Program was a co-sponsor and served on planning committees for the Illinois Composting Symposium held in Springfield and Earth Stewardship Day held in Springfield. The program also provided sponsorship of the Peoria Clean Water Celebration; the Annual Specialty Crop/ Organic Conference; 4 Southern Illinois Beginning Farmer Scholarships; and the Ag Day Awards luncheon held during the Illinois State Fair.

BLWR staff served on the Illinois Sustainable Agriculture Committee, Sustainable Agriculture Grant Review Committee, Illinois Forestry Development Council, Illinois Grassland Conservation Initiative Board, Natural Resources Conservation Service State Technical Committee, Illinois Rivers' Coordinating Council, and the Soil & Water Conservation District Advisory Board.

R.J. VOLLMER SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AWARD

The Illinois Department of Agriculture has named a Morgan County couple its 2014 Sustainable Agriculture Farmers of the Year. Jim and Mary Burrus (Indian Creek Farm) of rural Jacksonville, received the award on August 12 during the Agriculture Day Luncheon on the Director's Lawn at the Illinois State Fairgrounds.

Jim and Mary Burrus live on the farm where Jim was born and raised. His grandfather purchased the original 192 acres in 1946. Jim bought the adjoining 128 acres in 1998. They own 320 acres and rent an additional 340 acres near the home farm. About half of the farm is pasture, the other half tillable cropland on which Jim grows corn and soybeans using no-till. The remaining crop land is used to grow organic alfalfa that is supplemental feed for the 130 certified organic grass fed angus and red angus cattle raised. "We direct market about 40 head of certified organic grass fed beef to our customers each year. We also direct market 250 Cornish cross chickens that are raised organically, but can't be certified because there is no certified processing facility anymore in Illinois to take them to" said Jim. Their marketing is done through a farmer's market and by word of mouth from repeat customers.

Jim's interest in raising grass fed cattle began in 1994 when he attended a Pasture Improvement Seminar on Management Intensive Grazing. After attending a grazing school in 1995 he decided to convert the cattle operation to this system. Their first grass fed beef was sold in 1999 and the herd was certified organic in 2006. Since then he has installed over 12,000 feet of water lines with partial funding through the NRCS EQIP program, to provide water to the 13 paddocks on the farm. Fescue grass not eaten during the summer as the cows are rotated through the paddock system is harvested and stockpiled to use for winter feed.

Jim and Mary have hosted several field days, farm walks and sustainable agriculture tours on their farm and Jim has shared his expertise with others while speaking at the Illinois Specialty Growers/ Agritourism and Organic Conference, Missouri Forage and Grassland Conference and at Western Illinois University.

"We went to direct marketing grass fed organic cattle under a management intensive grazing system and pastured poultry as a way to better utilize our existing farm resources and generate added value without having to expand our acreage," Jim said. "By going organic with our livestock and staying more conventional with our cropping system using no-till we are able to find a balance that works for our farm and helps us sustain our resources. That is the key."

Indian Creek Farm is located at 2095 Arcadia Road, Jacksonville and can be reached at Indiancreek3@yahoo.com.

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
HENRY WHITE EXPERIMENTAL FARM & JACK ZELL FARM

HENRY WHITE EXPERIMENTAL FARM

The 94-acre Henry White Farm, four miles southwest of Belleville, was bequeathed to the Illinois Department of Agriculture in 1985 when the last ancestor of Henry White passed away. The will stipulates the land be used for agricultural experiments.

In 2015, numerous schools, civic organizations and community groups were provided educational presentations or visited the farm including schools from Millstadt, Waterloo and the junior Master Gardener program. Visits were used to view the crop research, tree research, wetlands, prairie, forests, conservation practices, herb garden, vegetable garden, children's garden, farmstead and field. Ecology students came to learn about agriculture and the wetlands on the Farm. Randy Meyer was the contract farmer and Dr. Bill Becker conducted cropping research for the IDOA on cyst nematodes and other areas. The Illinois Department of Agriculture entered into a new agreement with Monsanto to do research on cover crops and other issues. A total of 65 of the farm's 94 acres are devoted to mainly corn and soybeans. Farming provides research opportunities and revenue to offset operating expenses.

Prairie plants, such as Black-eyed Susan, Rattlesnake Master, Alumroot and Blazing Star, are growing together with several kinds of grass, including Big Bluestem, Little Bluestem, Indian Grass, Side-oats Grama, and Switch Grass, on 4.3 acres of restored prairie. A controlled prairie burn was again held in March. The burn was intended to keep invasive species in check and was coordinated by Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists help. This year the burn was done on the South part of the prairie and was followed up with the cutting of the invasive plants. Additional seeding was done to introduce new plants into the prairie mix.

The farm's 6.3 acres in three wetland impoundments support fish, amphibians and a variety of plants. A dock extends over the largest impoundment so plant and animal life at various depths may be observed. The wetlands offer a wide array of birds a place to nest and feed during the migrating season including Canadian Geese, Mallard ducks, Great Blue Heron and Great Egret. Classes were held to train University of Illinois Master Naturalists about wetlands.

Planted in 1994, the 4.4 acre deciduous woods contain oak, maple, pecan, dogwood and other species of trees and shrubs. White pine, spruce and other evergreens grow in the 1.1 acre evergreen grove. As the wooded areas mature, they offer researchers a unique opportunity to observe the natural succession of plant and animal life. A Master Naturalist from the U of I Extension is continuing work on a Tree Identification program on the Farm.

Master Gardeners from the Madison - St. Clair Unit of the University of Illinois Extension have gardens for every age group to use for field day activities and trials. Types of gardens include: Kids Garden, Prairie Garden, Native Plant Garden, Butterfly Garden, Ornamental Grass Plot, Herb Garden, Kitchen Garden and Small Fruits. In 2014, a record total of over 10,000 pounds of produce were donated to local food pantries.

Crimson clover and other plants were planted in the fall as a cover crop in the garden to increase organic matter and prevent erosion.

The Bellville Rose Society has planted an Earth Kind Rose Garden. The program was developed at Texas A&M to find roses that would thrive with no pesticides, fertilizers or pruning and the study is in its fourth year. Greater use of the farm has been made possible by McKendree University & Southern Illinois - Edwardsville. Southwestern Illinois College has continued to work with us in furnishing plants for our gardens.

As more people visit the Farm we are seeing a growth in the interest of using the Farm as an outdoor classroom and learning experience including the Southern Illinois nut growers, Kaskaskia Audubon Society and Junior Master Gardeners of Waterloo.

HENRY WHITE EXPERIMENTAL FARM RESEARCH REPORT—2013

There were four research plots at the farm in 2013. Fields 1N, 1S, 4, and 5 were soybean plots. The season started out very wet and planting was delayed several times. Field 5 and the south half of Field 1S were planted on June 17. The rest of the plots were planted on July 8th. The average soybean yield for St. Clair County in 2013 was 39.0 bushels per acre. The soybeans in the Field 1N plot averaged 45.4 bushels per acre; the soybeans in the Field 1S plot averaged 43.0 bushels per acre; the soybeans in the Field 4 plot averaged 50.0 bushels per acre; and the soybeans in Field 5 averaged 46.2 bushels per acre. This report will describe the results of Field 5. The other fields were very similar to Field 5.

Field 5

The research objective for Field 5 was to investigate the soil, plant, and grain factors that contribute to quantity and quality of soybeans in combination with nematode control.

Plot design and treatments:

The plot design for Field 5 was a simple paired comparison containing four replicates of treatments and controls. Soybean seeds treated with a combination of SC27N (a microbial mixture), the new strains of Bradyrhizobium, Azospirillum (a free-living nitrogen-fixing bacterium), humic acid, and liquid chitin. The soybean seeds in the control strips did not have any seed treatments. During the growing season, tissue samples were collected in every strip. At harvest time, the yield for each strip was measured using a weigh wagon from the local FS company. Soil tests were taken in each strip after harvest. Samples of soybeans from each strip were sent to the lab for analyses. Soil was also collected from each strip for nematode assays and soybean cyst nematode counts.

Quantity results:

There were no significant differences in yield between the treated and control strips. The treated strips had significantly higher levels of soil sodium (21.0 vs. 16.9 ppm).

Quality results:

The soybeans in Field 5 averaged 35.1% protein and 20.2% oil at 13% moisture. This was the first time in three years of testing that both the protein and the oil were above the standard levels for the State of Illinois. The treated strips had slightly higher protein and slightly lower oil than the control strips.

There were a total of 14 significant differences among all the soil, plant, and grain factors observed between the treated strips and control strips. The most noteworthy difference was in the area of nematode control (four significant differences). The treated strips had lower nematode indices (BNI): 27.8 versus 34.5. Generally a BNI level under 50 would be considered as only a slight problem with nematodes. The treated strips had a better, good:bad nematode ratio: 21.2 vs. 8.9. A good:bad ratio higher than 10:1 is desirable. The treated strips had lower total parasitic nematodes and lower percent parasitic nematodes in the assays: 32.0 vs. 68.0 per 100 ml. of soil and 5.5% vs. 10.6%. This was the first time that the nematode assays from the farm showed nematodes under the damaging level of 10%. See Table 1.

Table 1. Comparison between the treated and control soybean strips in Field 5.

	BNI	Good:Bad Ratio	Total Parasitic	% Parasitic
Treated	27.8	21.2	32.0	5.5
Control	34.5	8.9	68.0	10.6
Difference	24%	58%	112%	95%

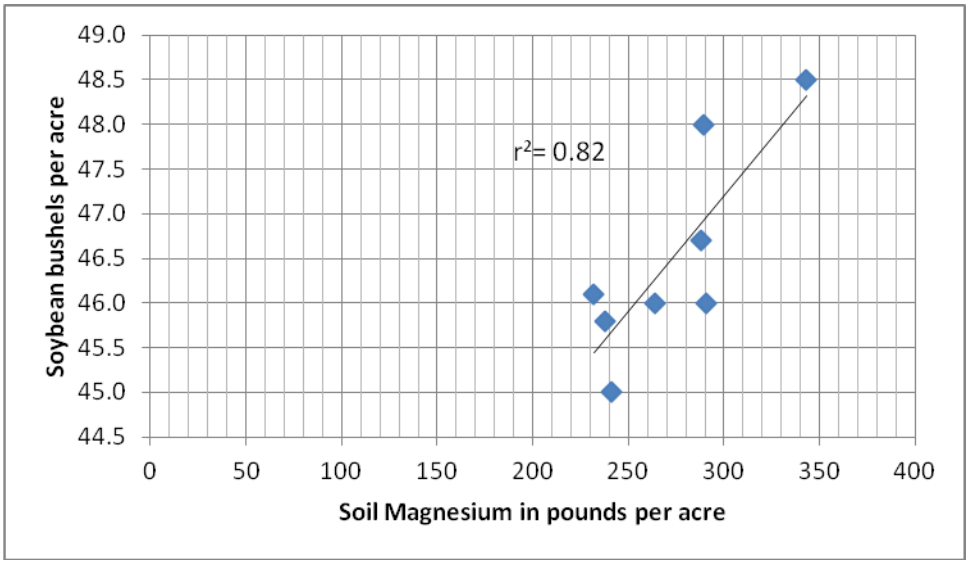
According to the comparative analyses of the tissue tests, the most limiting nutrient for Field 5, was iron, followed closely by potassium. High calcium in the tissue continues to be a problem at the farm. Calcium can be antagonistic towards the uptake and utilization of both iron and potassium. However the potassium in the soybean tissue in 2013 was improved from the level observed in 2012: 1.52% vs. 1.34%.

Field 5 Correlations:

All the data was examined for significance with 1329 correlations. The range of data for each soil factor, each tissue value, each grain value, and yield were compared with every other factor in an effort to pinpoint a set of components that would explain any differences noted between the control and treated strips. There were 40 significant correlations observed from the data. The three items of most interest are the yield, protein, and oil.

The yield had a good positive correlation (.83) with the soil magnesium.

Graph No. 1: Correlation between soybean yield and soil magnesium.



Neither the grain protein nor the grain oil had any significant correlations. The grain protein's best correlation (0.62) was with the grain copper. The grain oil's best correlation (0.68) was with the grain molybdenum.

Field 5 Comparative Analysis

On a relative basis, sodium was the lowest of all the elements tested in the soybean tissue. Of the essential nutrients, potassium was the most limiting. The calcium to sodium ratio was the most out-of-balance. There were 14 good ratios and an average deviation of 110. The low sodium was negatively influencing the deviations. When the four ratios of sodium are ignored, the average deviation drops to 48 and that is very good.

In the soybean seeds, iron was the lowest relative nutrient, followed closely by sodium and molybdenum. The calcium to sodium ration was the most out-of-balance. There were 17 good ratios and an average deviation of 45.

Field 5 Soil Nutrients

Some small gains were observed when the soil tests from 2012 and 2013 were compared. The soil potassium increased 8 pounds per acre. The percent base saturation of potassium stayed the same at 1.3%. Increasing the potassium in this field is proving to be difficult. Following the drought year of 2012, the calcium increased by 422 pounds per acre. Calcium competes with both potassium and magnesium for space on the exchanges sites. The calcium ion with a valence of plus two is held more tightly than potassium with its charge of only plus one. The base saturation of calcium was high at 83.2%. Optimum balanced value for calcium is about 75%.

Both the soil manganese and soil sodium increased slightly. These two nutrients are synergistic to each other for plant uptake and utilization.

Discussion for Field 5:

On the path to sustainable agriculture it is extremely important to control the parasitic nematodes in order to achieve a healthy root system that will in time lead to optimum nutrient uptake. Herein lays another problem. Optimizing all the soil nutrients from year to year is a struggle as the forces and weather conditions of nature dictate the direction of the balancing. For several years, the biology of the soil (also connected with the organic matter content) has had more influence on the final yield than any other factor. Adverse weather conditions will affect the soil biology more so than the soil chemistry and soil physics. However, a diverse community of beneficial organisms will help to buffer the effects of bad weather.

In 2013, the control of the parasitic nematodes was accomplished. With this success, it is now feasible to expect better yields and more profits per acre. Although it is a complicated system, using all the correlations described above will guide the research in the future. By following the significant positive and negative correlations, strategies can be developed to target the nutrients in low supply and facilitate better uptake by the plants. In the last three years some remarkable advances have been made using the Redmond mineralized salt. It is suspected that this salt is acting as a catalyst, probably more for the soil life than the soil chemistry. One reference suggests that a soil level of 100 ppm of sodium is desired. At the current level of 18.9 ppm, there is a lot of room for improvement.

In regards to the quality of the soybeans, namely the soy protein and soy oil, several lessons can be gleaned from the last three years of this systems approach. The soy protein is basically made of building blocks containing carbon, oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen, and sulphur. Striving for a nitrogen:sulphur ratio of 15.8:1 in both the soy tissue and the soy seed is desirable. Matching up the nitrogen and sulphur needs of the yield goal is one way of obtaining that ratio. When the yield goal's nitrogen and sulphur demands exceed the estimated nitrogen and sulphur contributions from the soil and the plant residues, then additional nitrogen and sulphur need to be applied. The soy oil is correlated well with the soybean yield which in turn is greatly influenced by the amount of soil organic matter, tissue potassium, tissue magnesium, and the amount of nematode damage. Additionally, identifying the most-limiting nutrient for yield is always an important consideration. In many ways all of these factors are linked together and there is no justification to single out one as being more important than all the others. It has been observed that the range of the different nutrients in the seed is very narrow and much less than the range in the tissue. Somehow the plant senses how many nutrients are in reserve and how much yield it can reasonably support. For a species of plant to survive the quality of the seed is more important than the quantity. The how, when, and why the different nutrients are transported from the tissue to the seed is then directly related to the most-limiting nutrient.

The future goal of research at the HWEF will focus on beneficial soil life and how together with the lessons learned and the nutrients to improve will lead to a better sustainable system. Some very promising biological mixtures are on the market. Integrating these organisms and understanding their role will be challenging, but rewarding.

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE - JACK ZELL FARM

In 1999, Jack Zell bequeathed 280 acres in Effingham and Fayette counties to the Illinois Department of Agriculture so it would remain in agricultural land, and not be developed for other purposes. The Department long term plans are to develop these two tracts into educational and research labs with the primary goal toward maintaining good stewardship of the land through conservation and other means possible.

The farm consists of two parcels. The 160 acre parcel in Effingham County is mostly cropland and relatively flat with 15 acres of trees. The 120 acre parcel in Fayette County is very rolling to relatively flat in areas. On this site, there are 48 acres of cropland with the remaining 72 acres in trees and grass areas. There are now five active oil wells on the property.

The Fayette County parcel offers many opportunities in the future for outdoor education and training purposes in areas of agriculture research, forestry management, and wildlife habit. There is a small area that has brine damage from previous oil activities (less than an acre).

The Effingham County tract also will provide opportunities for demonstration and research on a relatively large acreage to promote conservation practices and to generate income for both parcels.

A wet spring and favorable weather contributed to average corn yields in 2014 with an average of 165 bushel per acre while a warm and dry August helped the soybeans average 52 bushel per acre.

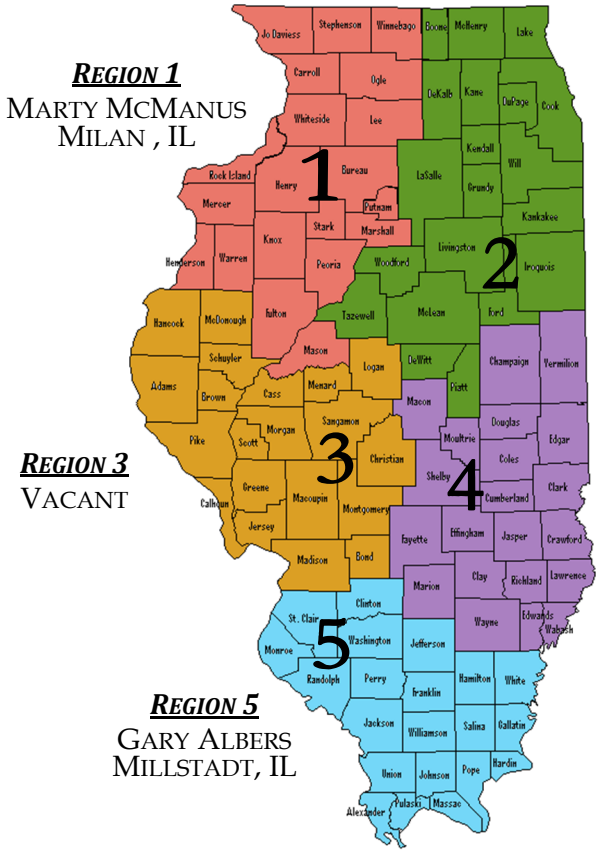
PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES

The success of the soil and water conservation programs in Illinois results from the close working relationship of all partners. Illinois has a strong history and legacy of soil and water conservation. Numerous local, state and federal agencies have conservation program responsibilities that complement each other to collectively achieve the goal of protecting/ conserving our soil and water resources. Other program benefits also include areas of farmland protection, sustainable agriculture, nutrient management, watershed planning and protection, forest management, wildlife habitat protection and environmental education. Partnership activities summarized in the report can only be achieved through cooperative efforts of all the conservation partners.

The chart located on the next page provides a snapshot of outreach and education efforts for the 97 SWCDs reaching both rural and urban constituents. Additional pages follow outlining program accomplishments from other partners including county Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Association of Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

For more information on local programs and activities or technical assistance, contact your local Soil and Water Conservation District. If you have an opportunity, please thank these partners for all their dedication and hard work!

THE BUREAU OF LAND AND WATER RESOURCES HAS DIVIDED THE STATE INTO 5 REGIONS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE PURPOSES. EVERY REGION HAS AN ASSIGNED BUREAU REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE THAT WORKS WITH EACH SWCD LOCALLY TO IMPLEMENT THE STATE SOIL CONSERVATION PROGRAMS.



OUTREACH AND EDUCATION EFFORTS

Conservation Information Education Outreach	# Activities	# Participants
Conservation Tours for Adults	31	1,233
Conservation Tours for Students (K-12)	26	5,659
Conservation Tillage Meetings	17	630
Watershed Meetings	124	1,885
TMDL Meetings	0	0
Watershed Tours	6	148
Annual Meetings		4,155
Forage/Pasture Demo	53	1,971
Woodland/Windbreak Wildlife Demo	9	301
Soil Stewardship Meetings/Programs	80	6,039
Lady Landowner Meetings/Tours	16	461
Meetings with Special Interest Groups	261	5,219
Agronomy Days	11	4,453
Contractor Workshop	13	421
Displays at Fairs, Banks, etc	83	52,177
Field demonstrations plots *(number of plots)*	35	-
Classroom Presentations		
K-8 Grade	1,899	52,431
9-12 Grade	121	3,025
College	18	367
Educator Workshops	40	578
Conservation Education Days	371	23,316
Arbor Day/Earth Day	345	16,470
Conservation Education Contest		
Poster	86	6,265
Photo	7	307
Other	25	1,308
Provide Scholarships	39	
FFA Soils Judging Contest	28	1,999
Other	691	22,349
	# of Schools	**# of Participants**
Envirothon	266	1,943
Provide School Projects	46	-
TOTAL OUTREACH		**215,110**

Public Relations	#	Distribution
Newsletters	162	114,108
Teacher Newsletters	38	5,036
Newspaper Articles (# of papers)	607	214
Radio Spots (stations)	309	56
T.V. Spots (stations)	50	22
Websites (# of hits)	48	86,901
Conservation Speaking Engagements (# attendees)	70	3,041
Products and Services		**Customers**
Tree Sales	83	3,579
Plant Sales	22	347
Fish Sales *(# of annual sales)*	155	4,560
Conservation Seed *(report in acres)*	3,429	660
Equipment Rental		
Drill/Planter/Seeder (report in acres)	41,479	4,014
Scraper	-	59
Tree Planter (report in acres)	606	112
Other	5,365	242
Used Oil Collection *(report in gallons)*	2,862	143
Rain Barrel Sales *(# sold & # of*	205	183
Aerial & GIS Maps / Plat Books	3,057	2,388
Other	33,046	6,977
Land Use Activities	**Number**	**Acres**
Natural Resource Reports	423	5,453
Land Evaluation Site Assessments (LESA)	74	1,733
Soil Erosion Sediment Control Plan Reviews	355	3,262
Soil Erosion Sediment Control Inspections	1,187	-
Soil Borings/Mapping	156	443
Facility Planning Area Reviews	20	-
Flood Related Reviews	73	-
Mining Activities	18	-
Pipeline/Utilities Activities	24	-
Other	1,242	-
	# of Activities	# of Attendees
SESC Tours/Workshops	12	789
Land Use Meetings/Hearings	107	1,689
Farmland Protection Events	3	177
Ag Areas Meetings	5	122
Flood Related Meetings	3	84

ILLINOIS NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

USDA NRCS
United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Illinois NRCS Conservation Accomplishments

The information below captures activities and accomplishments of Illinois producers and conservation solutions put on the ground during Fiscal Year 2014. Different practices and programs make this work possible. Federal funds are allocated and organized in separate funding pools in order to direct funds to specific resource issues or watershed locations. Funding pools in Illinois include the following:

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

Funding Pools	Contracts	Acres Enrolled	Financial Assistance Obligated
General EQIP	58	5,622	$1,891,146
Forest Management Implementation	7	375	$110,890
Grazing Land Operations	45	3,565	$2,463,164
Confined Livestock Operations	23	5,524	$4,004,624
FY14 Certified Organic	0	0	0
FY14 On-Farm Energy	7	3,017	$14,119
FY14 Organic Transition	3	112	$22,260
FY14 Seasonal High Tunnels	18	36	$155,314
Drainage Water Management Special Funding Pool	8	1,220	$59,480
Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watershed Initiative (MRBI)	13	1,112	$294,786
National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI)	20	1,461	$491,835
Driftless Area Landscape Conservation Initiative (DALCI)	178	8,155	$634,837
Wildlife Habitat Conservation	6	403	$161,765
Conservation Activity Plans			
Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan	41	4,971	$310,999
Drainage Water Management Plan	18	2,046	$36,085
Forest Management Plan	50	2,615	$43,977
Grazing Management Plan	1	13	$737
Nutrient Management Plan	1	1,210	$2,398
Total	**497**	**41,457**	**$10,675,404**

EQIP Backlog/Unfunded Applications

Category	Unfunded Applications	Number of Applications w/ Known Costs	Total Known Costs for Applications
Non-Livestock	2,002	927	$13,751,037
Livestock	313	113	$8,098,886
Total	**2,315**	**1,040**	**$21,849,923**

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

Funding Pools	Contracts	Acres Enrolled	Financial Assistance Obligated
Statewide Ag	534	395,469	$8,499,718
Statewide NIPF	24	3,555	$22,933
Total	**558**	**399,024**	**$8,522,651**

Easement Programs

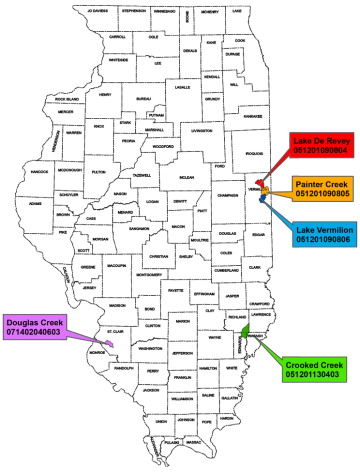
No. Easements	Acres Protected	Financial Assistance Obligated	Restoration Funds Allocated
Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) - Wetland Reserve			
7	270	$1,077,553	$1,967,263

Rental Agreements

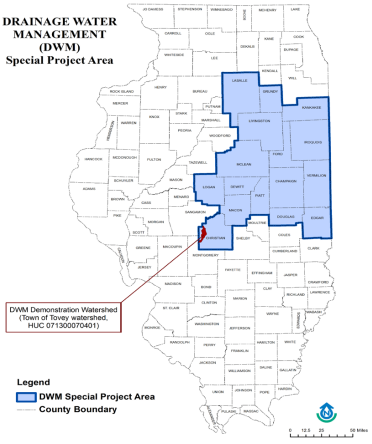
Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)			
6	818	$189,850	0

All contract information has been certified by NRCS Resource Economics Analysis and Policy (REAP) Division.

National Water Quality Initiative – The National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) provides financial and technical assistance to farmers through EQIP. The goal is to put conservation practices on the ground to improve water quality. Watersheds receiving priority funding include: Douglas Creek in St. Clair County; Crooked Creek- Bon Pas in parts of Richland, Wabash, Edwards, & Lawrence Counties; and Lake Vermilion, Lake De Revey, and Painter Creek in Vermilion County. These areas cover more than 107,000 acres identified as impaired with degraded water quality issues.



Drainage Water Management – With nearly 10 million acres of flat agricultural cropland in Illinois, NRCS Illinois took a special direction with Drainage Water Management in 2014, targeting 14 counties for a Special DWM Project and a demonstration watershed site. Counties include LaSalle, Grundy, Kankakee, Livingston, Ford, Iroquois, McLean, Logan DeWitt, Piatt, Champaign, Vermilion, Edgar, Douglas, Macon and Christian. The Town of Tovey Watershed, located in northwest Christian County, is the demo headquarters. Visit http:// www.nrcs.usda. gov/wps/portal/ nrcs/detail/ il/water/resources/? cid=nrcs141p2_030488 to learn how DWM works and view a short video.



Soil Health & Cover Crops—Illinois farmers, NRCS teams, and other conservation partners continued to make great strides with these popular and effective solutions during 2014. NRCS I moved the effort further with outstanding tools, products, meetings, workshops, and showcased outstanding Illinois farmers who found success with soil health management systems.

Throughout 2014, NRCS worked with partners and customers to offer ideas, incentives, and way to improve crop production, protect natural resources, and find sustainable options on Illinois working lands. We held three events with key partners and sponsors. "Conservation Cropping Seminars" replaced the 'No-Till Seminars' as the new hot trend in conservation solutions. Attendance and interest was strong at all sessions and three more events are underway and building momentum for 2015. As 2015 has been declared the "International Year of Soil," expect to see even more good news and opportunities for improving soil health next year!

Our Newest Acronym: RCPP

NRCS' new conservation program, the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), was authorized in the 2014 Farm Bill. RCPP streamlines conservation efforts to use EQIP, CSP, and ACEP funds as well as local partners to bring funds to the project and leverage them with federal dollars.

This program will competitively award funds to customized state and regional conservation projects. Eligible partners include private companies, universities, non-profit organizations, local governments and others joining with agricultural and conservation organizations and producers to invest money, manpower and materials to their proposed initiatives.

RCPP offers great opportunities to create and complete meaningful, needed projects that are supported locally. It also opens doors to new partnerships. We will learn more about what RCPP involves as we complete the process and engage all partners.

For more information contact:

Ivan Dozier, State Conservationist 217.353.6600
ivan.dozier@il.usda.gov

ILLINOIS ENVIROTHON

The Illinois Envirothon program combines classroom learning with hands-on field experiences focused around five major topics—Aquatics, Forestry, Soils, Wildlife and a Current Environmental Issue. 2014's current issue was "Sustainable Agriculture; Locally Grown". The five member student teams rotate through five outdoor testing stations, where their knowledge is evaluated and scored through written examination. Additionally, the competition includes an oral presentation component that challenges students to effectively apply and communicate a solution to a complex environmental issue.

The Illinois SWCD's, Association of Illinois SWCD's, the Illinois Farm Bureau, Illinois SWCD Employees' Association, Illinois Department of Agriculture and the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency are instrumental in compiling the written examination and conducting the statewide contest.

2014 Illinois Envirothon State Winners

Midland High School,

LUC 2 - Marshall/Putnam County

2nd Place

Glenbrook South High School
LUC 16 - North Cook County

3rd Place

Altamont High School
LUC 10 - Effingham County

Teams Participating in the 2014 Illinois State Envirothon

LUC 1 - Stephenson SWCD
Dakota HS

LUC 2 - Marshall-Putnam SWCD
Midland HS

LUC 3 - Grundy SWCD
Morris HS

LUC 4 - McDonough SWCD
West Prairie HS

LUC 5 - Mason SWCD
Midwest Central HS

LUC 6 - Piatt SWCD
Monticello HS

LUC 7 - Edgar SWCD
Paris HS

LUC 8 - Cass SWCD
A-C Central HS

LUC 9 - Montgomery SWCD
Lincolnwood HS

LUC 10 - Effingham SWCD
Altamont HS

LUC 11 - Richland SWCD
West Richland HS

LUC 12 - Madison SWCD
Triad HS

LUC 13 - Marion SWCD
Sandoval HS

LUC 14 - None

LUC 15 - Jackson SWCD
Murphysboro HS

LUC 16 - North Cook SWCD
Glenbrook South HS

CATEGORY WINNERS:

AQUATICS: Sandoval High School

FORESTRY (tie score): Midland High School and Altamont High School

SOILS : Altamont High School

WILDLIFE (tie score): Midland High School and Paris High School

5th CATEGORY (tie score): Altamont High School and West Richland High School

ORAL PRESENTATION: Midland High School

The 2014 current issue was:

Sustainable Agriculture;

Locally Grown

2014 Conservation Farm Family winners

DeCrane Family

LUC 2: Henry County SWCD

McGreal Family

LUC 3: Livingston County SWCD

Doll Dairy

LUC 9: Bond County SWCD

Lange Family

LUC 16: Will-South Cook SWCD

Special Thanks to our Conservation Farm Family Sponsors

AISWCD Awards

The Association of Illinois Soil & Water Conservation Districts recognizes individuals and organizations for their continued efforts in supporting conservation and preserving our natural resources. The following are the awards that were given out at the 66th Annual Meeting in 2014.

McKibben Scholarship:

Matthew "Tyler" Pokojski, Marion Co SWCD

Outstanding Forestry Contribution:

Matt Peterson, Schuyler Co SWCD

ISWCDEA Scholarship:

Mike Malon, JoDaviess Co. SWCD

Legislator of the Year:

U.S. Congressman Rodney Davis

Teacher of the Year—9-12:

Julie DeSutter, Mason Co. SWCD

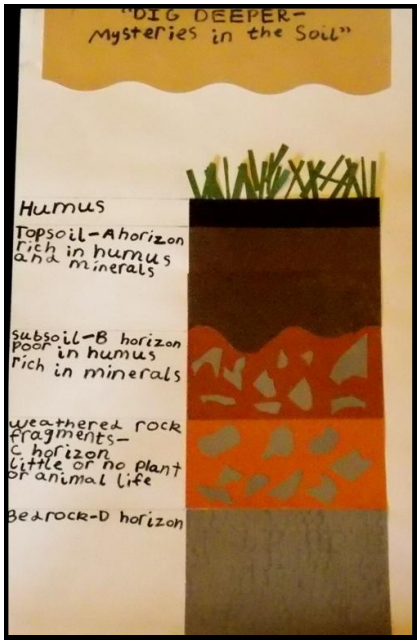
Friend of Conservation:

meijer

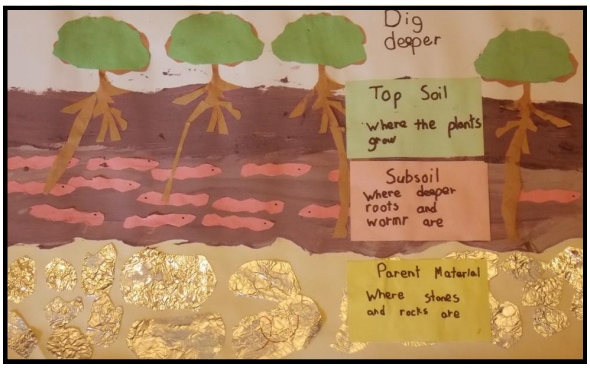
Teacher of the Year—K-8:

Michael Hershiser, McHenry/Lake SWCD

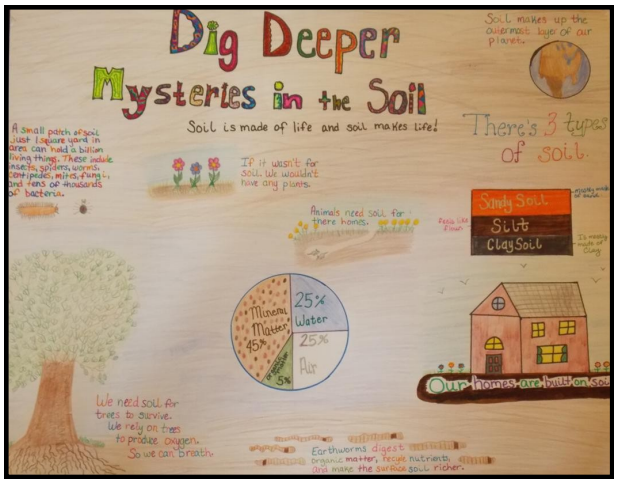
POSTER CONTEST WINNERS



Delaney-Jo Fortney: 2-3
Stephenson County SWCD

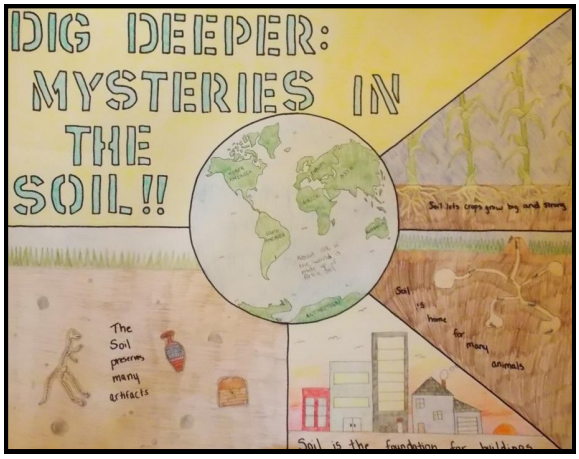


Micah Schrader: K-1
Stephenson County SWCD



Alina Boice: 4-6
Mason County SWCD

Nick Strauch: 10-12
DeKalb County SWCD



Olivia Weber: 7-9
Livingston County SWCD

PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS—2014

Sponsored by AISWCD Auxiliary

Brian Elliott

Adult: Ag/Conservation Across America

"Planting Corn Under the Towers"

Dean Johnson

Adult: Conservation in Action

"Who's Watching Who"

Dean Johnson

Adult: Conservation Practices

"Stonetoe on the Kishwaukee"

Molly Jacobs

Youth: Close Up Conservation

"Save the Bees!"

Amy Lovekamp

Adult: Close Up Conservation

"Busy Bee"

SWCD PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Adams County SWCD assisted with the Annual Western IL/ Northeast MO No-Till Crop Management Conference. 162 people attended.

The **Adams County SWCD** has a tree planter and tree spades that are made available to clients.

The **Bond County SWCD** partnered with the local County Government and FAYCO, a private not-for-profit organization, constructing a hoop building on SWCD property for the establishment of a county recycling center. The SWCD serves as the county recycling coordinator. The County Board provided the funding to construct the facility and Fayco removes the recyclables weekly. The service is free to residents of Bond County.

The **Bond County SWCD** partnered with the local Quail Forever - Little Bluestem chapter, IDNR, U of I Extension, Tri-County Beekeepers, Greenville FFA Chapter and Mulberry Grove FFA Chapter, in sponsoring the 2014 Conservation Education Day. Quail Forever provided all of the fifth grade students in attendance (200) with a white oak tree to take home to plant in honor of Arbor Day. The education event focused on the topics of hydroponics, water conservation, wildlife, trees, lakes & streams, and pollinators.

The **Brown County SWCD** awarded an educational scholarship to a Brown County High School senior entering into a 2 or 4-year program in the field of agriculture or natural resources. Selection is based on scholastic accomplishments, community involvement and experience in the conservation of natural resources.

The **Brown County SWCD** co-sponsored the Ag Safety Day for 425 students in Pre-K through 4th graders from the public and parochial schools. Students enjoyed a day with farm animals, farm implements, farm chores, as well as several stations centered around safety on the farm including 4-wheeler safety and fire truck/ambulance walk-through stations.

Brown County SWCD Director Steve Reich (below left) shared a presentation on swine at the Ag and Safety Day discussing birth, food, and products.

Brown County SWCD Scholarship winner Wade Yingling (above right) shares his experiences with kindergartners at Ag Safety day assisting them with the haying farm chore. Brian Gallaher, Brown County Fire District and Ambulance Director (below left) demonstrated life-saving equipment used in farm bins.

Arbor Day was celebrated by the **Brown County SWCD** with 60 third graders at Moore Memorial Park. The Administrative Coordinator, the CREP Resource Specialist, and NRCS Soil Conservationist, discussed the different parts of the tree, tree leaf identification, proper planting techniques, and enjoyed an afternoon playing Arbor Day Soccer and Tree Life Croquet. Each student received a White Oak tree for planting at home to mark the event.

The **Brown County SWCD** is the host site for a Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program Resource Specialist position. The position is funded by the AISWCD through a contract with IEPA. The employee assists IDNR, serving as a local representative, responsible for performing monitoring efforts in a multi-county area and updating management plans with landowners to remain in compliance with the requirements of their respective easements.

The **Bureau County SWCD** hosts a Conservation Kids Day for area 5th graders. The District had 275 students in attendance with many teachers and volunteers as well, at the Warnecke Woods natural area. Children spent the day at several different learning stations listening to presentations about topics such as streambank erosion, soils, firearm safety, snakes, butterflies, fish, and other topics. After lunch the students participated in a recycling relay race and a water jeopardy game.

Carroll County SWCD hosted a 2nd Grade Conservation Day in 2014. There were 100 students in attendance from each of the three schools in Carroll County. Throughout the day, students had an opportunity to tour different stations and to gain knowledge about conservation and natural resources. The stations the students attended were recycling, bird id, fish, enviroscape & ground water model.

Carroll County SWCD held the annual 4th Grade Conservation Day in conjunction with **Jo Daviess County SWCD** and **Whiteside County SWCD**. There were 700 students in attendance. There were 3 sections of students with 10 presenters in each section.

The **Carroll County SWCD** provided a white pine seedling to each 3rd Grade student in the county. Nearly 200 students were given a tree with a fact sheet about the white pine as well as directions on planting and caring for the seedling at home.

The **Champaign County SWCD** continues to promote cover crop adoption, through meetings, field days, news interviews, and newsletters. The amount of acres of cover crops continues to grow. Three years ago, only 300 acres of cover crops were planted in the county and this year we have over 3,000 acres. Cover Crops are still one of the most economical ways to protect and help soil health.

The **Champaign County SWCD** was very proud to be part of this Ninth Annual Boneyard Creek Community Day event to clean up litter from sites all over Champaign-Urbana. The District helped 20 volunteers to clean up a 7 acre farm field north of a large shopping district. The volunteers picked up 25 large garbage bags of trash. We used this opportunity to teach the volunteers how problematic plastic bags are to a farmer. The farmer was happy to have the opportunity to plant without stopping to remove the bags from his equipment every few minutes. The event ended with a meal for all of those that participated at the local park. The park was also filled with education items for all ages.

The **Christian County SWCD** co-sponsored the 2014 Pond Management Program at the Linda Kehias farm, west of Pana, Illinois along with the U of I Extension. Topics included: fish issues of stocking & maintaining healthy populations, watershed design, and weed & algae control challenges. The event was attended by 65 people.

The **Christian County SWCD** participated in the University of Illinois Dudley Smith Cow-Calf Day on the Farm north of Pana.

The **Clark County SWCD** sponsored the Fifth Grade Ag/Conservation Day which has been going on since 1993. The SWCD works with partners from the U of I Extension, Farm Bureau and Natural Resources Conservation Service to plan the event. Ag/Conservation Day takes place on a local farm, where students are presented information on various topics relating to agriculture and conservation. These topics include farming 101, renewable energy, water quality, forestry, wildlife, crop production, livestock production and farm safety. Students are provided with a 'hands on' learning experience. The Expo continues to be held each fall.

The **Clark County SWCD** partners annually with the local Farm Bureau and U of I Extension to sponsor an Ag Career Workshop. This event involves junior and senior students from all Clark County high schools; Martinsville, Marshall and Casey/Westfield. The workshop is very 'hands on' with students participating in a variety of activities pertaining to careers, placement, interviewing and employment. Speakers for the workshop include local Ag business owners and local junior college placement officers. The students also take an afternoon field trip to tour one of the areas' larger Ag businesses.

The **Clay County SWCD** purchased a new Toreq 13-yard scraper to rent to area farmers and landowners in an effort to increase the number of conservation practices installed in the county. With the decrease in amount of cost-share money available for waterways, terraces, basins, and diversions, the

scraper rental program has been very popular. The 13 yard scraper rents for $325.00 per day. The District also continues to rent a 9-yard scraper purchased in 2011 that can be pulled by smaller tractors.

The **Crawford County SWCD** participated in a county wide Conservation Field Day which is a fair like event for 5th grade students. The theme of the day was protecting and conserving natural resources.

The **Crawford County SWCD** partnered with the LaMotte Creek Watershed District to host a cover crop meeting to educate local producers of the benefits of planting cover crops.

The **Cumberland County SWCD** hosted a Cover Crop Seminar along with a field demonstration. Those in attendance were producers and landlords interested in learning more about the soil health, seed selection, establishment methods, reducing soil erosion and benefits such as holding nutrients in the soil.

The **Cumberland County SWCD** and the Cumberland County Board are active with the Lincoln Heritage RC&D which has provided dry hydrants for the local fire protection districts, holds several electronic recycling events, promotes good forestry conservation practices throughout the area and implements prescribed burn seminars to promote healthy wildlife conservation on the prairies and in the woodlands

The **Cumberland County SWCD** has an advisory position with the Cumberland County Board's Comprehensive Strategic Planning Group to better the development of Cumberland County. This group is looking for ways for the county/communities/people to grow financially and in population. This group also hopes to attract businesses, economic growth and to help the farming community. A strategic plan has been developed with efforts to begin implementing the plan soon.

The **DeKalb County SWCD** participated in two watershed tours of the Kishwaukee River Watershed. The Resource Conservationist and a SWCD Director narrated the tour. The tour was cooperative effort of the East Branch of the Kishwaukee River Watershed Steering Committee, and the DeKalb County Community Foundation. The tour highlighted Best Management Practices such as streambank stabilization, waterways, etc., flood mitigation efforts, a 50 acre wetland enhancement with the DeKalb County Forest Preserve District, a tour of the wastewater treatment facilities in both the City of Genoa and Sycamore. The Sycamore Park District highlighted improvements they have been making to naturalize detention basins within their district and how they plan to expand their nature trails throughout the community. A total of 50 DeKalb county residents participated in the tour.

The **DeKalb County SWCD** assisted American Farmland Trust and NRCS in planning a Lady Landowners meeting. The District was in charge of putting together a tour to assist lady landowners in understanding conservation practices and how they may work on the land that they own. The tour included a 100 acre wetland and native grass site; owners were on site sharing management decisions that they make to maintain this beautiful site. The tour also included a robotic dairy farm. Lady landowners were able to see a recently completed waste storage facility which was funded with USDA EQIP funds. Female USDA employees from FSA and NRCS also discussed USDA programs in the morning session before the tour began. 16 lady landowners from DeKalb and surrounding counties attended.

The **DeKalb County SWCD** assisted in working with a Kendall County Educator who also serves as a Director on the District board in putting together a Sustainable Agriculture tour for about 20 educators to

visit DeKalb County. The tour included a visit to the Nextera Wind Energy facility in Shabbona, a stop at the Waterman Winery, winner of the DeKalb County Sustainable Ag Award, and finally a tour of a wetland enhancement project at the Don and Nana Peterson Farm near Genoa. The Resource Conservationist discussed the features of the property and why it was well suited for a wetland program through CRP. Teachers were then given a tour to see first-hand how these conservation practices function on this family farm.

The **Douglas County SWCD**, in partnership with the American Farmland Trust and the Nature Conservancy, held a women's landowner meeting on April 22. This meeting was one of a series of "Women Caring for the Land" meetings held around the state with the partnership of the American Farmland Trust. A female Douglas County SWCD director and cover crop seed dealer was a featured speaker in the morning. A tour included a native grass planting and several crop fields, some that had been seeded to cover crop species that winter kill naturally and one seeded to cereal rye. The timing of the tour allowed the women to see the different spring field conditions created by the different cover crops.

The **Douglas County SWCD** partnered with the local Farm Bureau to hold an Environmental Stewardship Day for all of the 6th graders in the County. This annual event had over 200 student attendees this year. Topics included environmental issues, wildlife, soils, insects, recycling, and agricultural issues. SWCD staff gave presentations with the rainfall simulator demonstrating different agricultural management practices and their effects on water quality.

The **Edgar County SWCD** hosted a COM-2 e-recycle trailer, filling 42 trailers. Collection included old TVs, computers, monitors and miscellaneous electronics.

Ford County SWCD provided an Earth Day presentation for K-5th graders at GCMS elementary school. The presentation was an overview of the meaning of Earth Day, the history and what we could do to be good stewards of the Earth. This presentation was done in the beginning of the school day and kicked off a school wide Earth day event where each classroom participated in an Earth day project.

Ford County SWCD provided education to area 3rd graders about the importance of trees for Arbor Day. They provided each student with a tree seedling to take home and plant. They also educated the students on how to properly plant and take care of their seedling. Both GCMS, PBL and Tri-Point schools participated with a total of 228 students.

The **Gallatin County SWCD** held a Conservation Fair with presentations given to the 4-6th grade classes. A total of 10 presenters and 210 students participated.

The **Grundy County SWCD** annually holds a Natural Resources Tour for all the 5th grade students in the county. This past year, they hosted more than one thousand students in a three day period. While students attend the tour, they go through ten to twelve stations covering various topics involving natural resources. Some of the stations include web of life, conservation police, migration, wheel of energy, forestry, Build Illinois, and water jeopardy. Students learn about natural resources while having fun and enjoying the outdoors.

The **Grundy County SWCD** provided Colorado Blue Spruce trees to all the third graders in the county, totaling nearly 800 seedlings. They handed out the trees during the week of Arbor Day to help the kids celebrate the day as well as teach them valuable information about trees. They also provided a tree

planting instruction sheet and facts about the tree they are receiving. Over the years, more than 12,000 trees have been handed out to Grundy County third graders.

Each year the **Grundy County SWCD** participates in the Grundy County EARTH Expo. The expo highlights businesses and organizations in the county that deal with health, agriculture and the environment. They have a booth with information about the office and provide activities for children. They offer rain barrels for sale as well. During the four hour expo, they visit with 1,500-2,000 people.

Hancock County SWCD purchased 250 white pine seedlings and distributed them to county 3rd graders in observance of Arbor Day (below left). Educators' presentations and classroom activities allowed students the experience of planting a tree and learning of its importance to our environment.

Hancock County SWCD, USDA Farm Service Agency, Farm Bureau and U of I Extension, co-sponsored the 7th Annual Residue Management Conference (above). The conference provided over 120 attendees valuable networking opportunities and insight to the latest techniques for solving residue and nutrient management concerns. Speakers shared their knowledge and experiences about residue and nutrient management, soil health, enhancing wildlife habitat, equipment selection, weed control, seed and variety selections, and improving profits.

Hancock County SWCD awards the Glen Smiddy Memorial Scholarships, in honor of the former District Conservationist's contributions to soil conservation. County residents or students majoring in agriculture, agri-business, conservation or natural resources are eligible to apply. Criteria used in selecting recipients are: scholastic achievements; financial need; individual's moral character, maturity and demonstrated leadership attributes. Three students were awarded a $500 scholarship.

Henderson County SWCD and **Warren County SWCD** jointly gave presentations at the 4th Grade Ag Day Event. The event is sponsored by the local Farm Bureau and it gives 4th graders the opportunity to learn about the agriculture industry. They learn about soil erosion, pollution, corn, soybeans, the production of beef and pork, poultry and dairy industries. The event is well attended and the kids are amazed what they learn during these presentations.

Henderson County SWCD held its yearly Annual Meeting. A very nice dinner was served, followed by the business meeting and featured speakers. The District awarded the Conservation Farm Family Award. The meeting concluded with a presentation on cover crops. Dr. Ken Nimrick and Dr. Joel Gruver presented the basics of cover crops and the dual use they can provide as livestock forage.

Henry County SWCD held their annual meeting with 110 registered guests. The District held a business meeting and the election of officers. Guests were then treated to a presentation "Henry County, the Underground Railroad" presented by Angie Snook, Creator/Director of the Geneseo Historical Museum.

Henry County SWCD held a contractors breakfast with 25 in attendance. The SWCD, NRCS, FSA and Farm Bureau representatives provided program updates and were available for questions

Henry County SWCD held a conservation tour at the Al DeCrane residence with over 120 in attendance. All in attendance rode hay racks while viewing the conservation work completed on Mr. DeCrane's farm. Trees were donated to Washington, IL Tornado Relief.

The 2014 **Iroquois County SWCD** Annual Meeting was held at St Paul's School gym in Woodworth. The speaker was Kristin Decker, who is the Executive Producer of WGN Radio. She is a native of Milford, (in our county) and her topic was "putting a Face to the Business of Agriculture". Plaques were handed out to Poster Contest winners, Soil Judging, Envirothon, Scholarship, Lizzio Conservation Award and the Conservation Farm Family of the Year.

Iroquois County SWCD held the Lady Ag Seminar brunch at the Farm Bureau Meeting room in Gilman. There were 68 people in attendance. SWCD, FSA and NRCS Staff provided updates on program opportunities. Guest speaker Phil Farrell of Farrell Clydesdales, Inc., provided a very interesting presentation on raising, caring for, and selling of priceless horses. A fee to attend was charged in addition to 2 sponsors that donated money to cover the cost, and 2 sponsored that donated door prizes.

Jackson County SWCD participated in the Cover Crop for Fruit & Vegetable production tour with 21 people attending.

The **Jasper County SWCD** partnered with Vintage Tech Recyclers and hosted two recycling events. A total of 39,464 tons of electronic recyclables were collected.

The spring Quail Buffer Seeding Program was again a success for the **Jasper County SWCD** and landowners. The District seeded 66 acres on 15 tracts with a leased tractor. The program has helped allow the District to maintain its financial stability.

The **Jasper County SWCD** awarded one $1,000 scholarship to a graduating senior at Newton Community High School. The scholarship criteria require a student to be majoring in a natural resource or Ag related field to be eligible.

The fabric plow program has been a success for both the **Jasper County SWCD** and its customers since it started in 2007. The fabric plow provides landowners with newly constructed grass waterways, a way to install fabric checks on established grassed waterways. This year the fabric plow was used by 8 customers and 6369 ft. of fabric checks was installed.

The NRCS Soil Conservationist from Marion County gave landowners an overview of federal cost share programs for cover crops at the **Jefferson County SWCD's** cover crop meeting.

Jersey County SWCD continues to do field inspections for the IEPA on new NPDES Construction sites in the county. The District signed an inter-governmental contract with the IEPA in 2014 to continue the field inspections through June of 2019. The District staff will do on-site investigations to determine if a contractor/developer is following all design criteria in the SWPPP plans. The investigations are conducted before, during and after all construction phases. All findings are then recorded and sent to the regional IEPA office.

Jersey County SWCD continues to provide services under their MOU with the Jersey County Board. This MOU improves compliance with current and future storm water, erosion and sediment control ordinances and regulations. This district is in charge of reviewing storm water plans and assuring these plans are implemented by the builders. The MOU also addresses the districts involvement with the Ag Area Protections work and 22:02 projects completed for the subdivision committee.

Jersey County SWCD has an interagency contract with the **Calhoun County SWCD** to provide technical assistance for implementation of the state Conservation Practices Program and Stream bank Stabilization and Restoration Program. The District staff does layout, survey and design of any CPP or SSRP projects; develop plans and all related engineering sheets for contractor and landowner; conduct contractor preconstruction meetings; conducts checkout certification and field investigations; and evaluates and ranks new applications, presenting to the **Calhoun County SWCD** board for approval.

The **Jersey County SWCD** and NRCS field office staff has been working with landowners on the Otter Creek Project. A landowner meeting helped to identify landowner concerns in the watershed boundaries. Field inventories collected important soil erosion loss information on 24 different 160 acre parcels. Staff will visit 20 gully sites and 22 stream bank erosion sites. The soil loss information will be tabulated by the NRCS State Office staff using the Rapid Assessment Point Method (RAP-M). The ultimate goal of the Watershed Program is to compete and receive dedicated funding to assist landowners in the watershed boundaries in constructing traditional conservation practices to resolve soil erosion loss concerns.

The **Kane/DuPage County SWCD** hosted a Current Stormwater Regulations and Policies Seminar. The seminar was developed for engineers, planners and consultants, and addressed local, state, and federal regulations and policies for stormwater. The sessions gave participants an in depth overview of

existing policies as well as a projection of future regulations which included updated regulatory information from Army Corps of Engineers, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, US Environmental Protection Agency and also gave an update on the Urban Manual. Over 100 professionals attended.

The **Kane/DuPage County SWCD** was one of 6 counties to partner with IDOA, NRCS and U of I Extension to offer a Soil Health Seminar. Seminar presentations reviewed the properties of soil, principals of maintaining healthy soils, as well as incentive programs. Farmers were on hand to provide firsthand experience with no-till and cover crops.

The **Kendall County SWCD** was represented at the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) Annual Meeting in Anaheim, California. The district's Resource Conservationist and the Association of Illinois Soil & Water Conservation Districts (AISWCD) Program Coordinator attended the Urban & Community Assistance RPG Meeting sharing the recently printed Illinois Urban Manual - Field Manual for Inspection of Erosion & Sediment Control Best Management Practices (BMPs) with attendees from across the United States and territories. Additionally, the IUM Field Manual was presented during the NACD Share Fair at the Annual Meeting to conference attendees. The manual was very well received and continues to be a resource both in and outside of Illinois.

The **Kendall County SWCD** participated in the Ag in the Classroom program, in cooperation with the Kendall, Grundy and Will County Farm Bureaus and Joliet Junior College, in hosting an Agri-science Teacher Institute over four days in July. Fifteen teachers from the three counties participated in the course and were able to learn about food science, production, processing, and marketing through visiting farms and agri-businesses around the area. This institute was available for professional development units for teachers as well as graduate credits through Aurora University.

The **Kendall County SWCD** participated in the Ag in the Classroom program along with the local Farm Bureau Young Leaders and Kellogg Farms by hosting a Farm and Safety Camp for youth in the county in June. While at the camp, youth had the opportunity to learn about farm safety, electricity safety, livestock safety, and food safety. They also had the opportunity to learn about agriculture in general and meet farmers from around the area. The event was capped off with a meal for campers and families as well as fishing. The meal was provided through the Kendall-Grundy County Pork Producers.

Knox County SWCD donated more than 50 red maple bare-root tree seedlings toward the City of Washington rebuilding effort after the 2013 tornado outbreak. The City announced that an estimated 10,000 trees had been damaged or destroyed due to the EF-4 tornado. The City set aside land for planting tree seedlings temporarily until landowners are ready to transplant these trees to their landscaping. The City of Washington Public Works Department has space for several hundred more tree seedlings. The Department has also been utilizing volunteers to plant the seedlings.

Knox County SWCD was invited to present on the NASCA webinar "Effective Local Work Groups Influencing Farm Bill Priorities and Success with Local Input" and represent Illinois. Prior to this webinar, and in preparation, **Knox County SWCD** conducted a statewide survey to gather successes and failures of Local Work Group efforts across the state. Forty-three responses were received. The overall goal of the webinar was to network between states about what Local Work Group efforts were working well and why and also share what efforts were not working well and make recommendations for improvement.

Knox County SWCD worked with Stoerzbach Law Office and set up a presentation "CREP 101" for the West Central Illinois Association of Realtors. This presentation brought realtors "up to speed" on both the federal and state sides of this program and what is all entailed in the easements. The District plans to conduct a similar presentation for land auctioneers and title companies (and others who are involved in land sales). A common misconception is that conservation easements are similar to utility easements and that they are just regarding access, not acreage.

Knox County SWCD was invited by Knox College to represent the environmental sector and conduct mock job interviews at their Homecoming Alumni Student Career Network. The Resource Conservationist job description was submitted and three students "applied" for the job and were "interviewed". The District will likely gain some student volunteers from participating in this event. Overall, more than two dozen Knox College alumni returned to campus to give career advice and network with current students, including several who conducted mock job interviews.

Every year the **LaSalle County SWCD** hosts 3 Educational events for local schools to participate in. Two of these events are held at the District owned, Rasmusen Natural Area. One is held in the Spring for third graders and one in the Fall for fourth graders. The students are able to do a nature walk, learn about soils, erosion, birds, native grasses and forbes, trees, animal tracks and water. The students really enjoy getting out of the classroom and taking a hike. The other event is held at Shabbona Park near Harding, IL. This is host to second graders that go through several different stations that include soils, water, mammals and forestry.

The **Lawrence County SWCD** held a tillage day for all Lawrence County producers and the public. We had 8 different pieces of vertical tillage with 6 dealers present.

The **Livingston County SWCD**, along with the Conservation Technology Information Center (CTIC) hosted a National Conservation Tour in Livingston County. Approximately 300 people from 20 states visited three locations that highlighted innovative, cutting edge conservation practices. The tour began early in the morning, to accommodate a full day of field activities. Tour stops included; Kilgus Dairy; the Bachtold Farm and Trainor Farms. A lunch was provided at Kilgus Farm and the evening meal was held at Rooster Heaven Hunt Club.

The **Madison County SWCD**, SIUE, and Madison County Planning & Development, held our 9th Annual Erosion and Sediment Control Field Day. It was held at SIUE and the Roxana Land Fill. We showcased an extensive stream channel rehabilitation project. 165 people attended.

Marshall-Putnam SWCD held a Lady Landowners Tour for 50 ladies. The group toured The Rock Island Arsenal and the John Deere Pavilion. They were taught about each step of the dam and how it conserves water and land by stopping erosion. They were then taken into the city of LeClaire, IA to explore this history and the town.

Mason County SWCD hosted the thirteenth annual Mason County Discovery Day for third graders. The goal is to educate our youth about conservation for soil, water and wildlife; insects and the importance of pollinators; ecology; and natural and cultural history. Agencies that assisted with this day are the IDNR, U of I Extension, Illinois Natural History Survey, Illinois Master Naturalists, IEPA and Dickson Mounds Museum. 205 people were involved in this event. This program was funded through grants obtained by the SWCD from Lower Sangamon River RC&D and Dynegy Midwest Generation.

Mason County SWCD, in cooperation with the Central Regional Groundwater Committee, hosted a week of free private well water testing to residents of Mason County during "Groundwater Awareness Week". Residents were encouraged to bring in samples for testing of contaminants and the response was overwhelming. The goal was to provide residents with information about their residential water quality. Due to our shallow wells, water quality is a constant concern for residents and this program provided valuable information to those that participated.

McDonough County SWCD completed the installation of sewer medallions (below left) onto two high-visibility roads, with an additional road installation scheduled. The medallions remind people not to dump chemicals into the sewers as they drain into a nearby stream. The Ecology Club of Macomb High School and student volunteers from the Western Illinois Geology Department helped install the medallions. The medallions are designed to help prevent pollution to surface water and the potential effects to groundwater.

McDonough County SWCD held their Annual 5th grade Conservation Day (above right). Thirteen stations were set up. The Raptor Rehabilitators from Quincy, IL, conducted the opening ceremonies. Approximately 250 students attended.

The **Menard County SWCD** held its 8th annual Conservation Photo Contest. The event was open to all county residents following the same guidelines as the AISWCD contest. The First Place photo (below), titled "*Busy Bee"*, provided a close-up view of a bee visiting a sunflower. The Second Place photo was titled "*Fields of Geese"*. The Third Place photo was titled, "*Fresh Rain"*. The Honorable Mention photo was titled, "*Deer Double Take".* The first place photo was submitted to the AISWCD contest for state-level competition, where it won first place in its category.

The **Menard County SWCD** partnered with the Menard Co. Farm Bureau, U of I Extension - Sangamon/ Menard Unit, and the Sangamon-Menard Ag Education Partnership, to hold the annual Ag Discovery Day (above). Approximately 200 fifth grade students from all county schools attended the event. Presenters spoke to students about: conservation practices to prevent stream bank erosion; recycling; Illinois wildlife, minerals and rocks (geology) in Illinois; fisheries biology; farm animal facts; and farm machinery safety. Students participated in a trivia tournament to assess what they had learned throughout the day. The highest scoring class from each school district was awarded a potted tree to take with them.

The **Menard County SWCD** and IEPA provided presentations for the county fifth grade students, discussing this year's Stewardship Week theme, “Dig Deeper: Mysteries in the Soil”. The children were asked to do a poster incorporating the theme. Three winners were selected and awarded cash prizes. All of the winning entries were completed by students at the Cantrall Intermediate School. The first place entry was forwarded to the AISWCD for competition in their state-level contest.

Mercer County SWCD held a record fish sale. Following the hard winter, landowners in Western Illinois experienced fish kills in their ponds. The District conducted the annual spring fish sale in which 30,190 fish were provided to landowners along with 125 pounds of minnows. The District was notified by Logan Hallow Fish Hatchery that this was the largest sale in their company’s history. This sale provided 61 pond owners with much needed fish to re-establish healthy ecosystems in their ponds. A fall fish sale is also conducted. This program is regarded as a service to our producers and provides an important element to the total natural resource base.

McHenry/Lake County SWCD, in conjunction with McHenry County Schools Environmental Education Program and the Health Department put on a Groundwater Field Day for area 6th graders. A total of 4 schools participated in the event where the students traveled to 4 stations covering soil infiltration/soil science, well drilling, water testing and groundwater flow. At the end of the day students played "Trivial Pursuit", testing them on what they learned throughout the day.

A total of 16 FFA teams from 4 SWCDs (**McHenry/Lake, DeKalb, Boone and Kane/Dupage County SWCDs**) tested their soils knowledge at our Dean Street facility in Woodstock. The teams of 5 traveled to 5 soil pits scattered throughout the site and filled out their Land Use Judging Cards. Although the weather did not cooperate, all the kids had a fun time.

This year **McLean County SWCD** held multiple tours, and a workshop to educate producers and Certified Crop Advisors about soil health and cover crops. This joint effort was made possible by the Illinois Department of Agriculture, American Farmland Trust, The Nature Conservancy, NRCS and **McLean**

County SWCD. The District worked with IDOA to sponsor two cover crop plots along I55 with signage to promote it. The District utilized those plots, and many other producer fields to showcase cover crops in two separate tours. Attendees were educated on soil health by Roger Windhorn "NRCS Soil Scientist" and then were able to tour multiple sites showing different types, species, and level of management by each producer. In the spring we revisited those same fields, before any mechanical disturbance. At one location a soil pit was dug in a cover crop field to demonstrate the real benefit cover crops contribute to soil health. The soil health seminar was geared towards Certified Crop Advisors and Agri business professionals looking to gain Soil and Water Credits. There were numerous speakers and informative discussions on cover crops and soil health.

McLean County SWCD, the City of Bloomington, and a grant from IEPA were responsible for the installation of 1,100 feet of shoreline protection, and 100 feet of fish lunkers at Comlara Park, Evergreen Lake. The project required 1,250 ton of RR4 rock to accomplish the job. The shoreline's obvious erosion issues were becoming a hazard for the Comlara beach area, but now after completion serves as excellent habitat for aquatics and a stable shoreline for the park.

The **McLean County SWCD**, Illinois Department of Agriculture, NRCS, Illinois Stewardship Alliance and the American Farmland Trust held a Conservation Cropping Systems Seminar in Normal IL. The event highlighted soil health improvements, cover crop success, and wise nutrient management. Attendees were able to hear from farmers, meet experts, and share their own knowledge with others. Over 150 Agri business professionals, farmers, and staff attended this meeting.

The **Monroe County SWCD** co-sponsored a field day with the Southern Regional Groundwater Protection committee. The event was held at Camp Vandeventer.

The **Morgan County SWCD** held a Cover Crop, “Back to Basics” informational meeting with speakers and power point presentations followed by question and answer session.

Morgan County SWCD held a Cover Crop Field Exercise. Speakers and a tour to one of our Cover Crop farmers operation provided key information to those attending.

Morgan County SWCD participated in the AG DAY for area grade schools and the Reality Store for Junior High Students.

Peoria County SWCD expanded the tree sale fund raiser from 1 school to three. Approximately 500 trees were sold and $500 was raised by the three schools. The teachers felt like they received better feedback from parents than when they push candy bars and Market Day materials.

Perry County SWCD, in conjunction with the counties in LUC 15 held our Envirothon competition. We had 19 teams participate from 11 high schools in our council.

Randolph County SWCD played host to the fifth grade Conservation day with 240 students enjoying presentations about wildlife, fish and Illinois agriculture. This is a 40 year tradition at the Randolph County Conservation area.

Rock Island County SWCD was awarded a grant from American Farmland Trust to "Accelerate the Adoption of Cover Crops". The grant allowed the SWCD to seed one cover crop demonstration plot and host 2 informational meetings and 2 cover crop field days. The events were a success; the local NRCS and SWCD staff identified five farmers, who are new to cover crops.

Rock Island County SWCD Eco Camp is a school field trip for 1st-3rd graders held at Rock Island County's Loud Thunder Forest Preserve. The event is coordinated by the Regional Office of Education and made possible with many partners and volunteers, including **Rock Island County SWCD**. Fall Eco camp consists of programs on prairie heritage, prairie management, wildlife, wood utilization, tree identification, and forest management. There is also a Spring Eco Camp with different programming. Providing an educational opportunity for kids to experience and enjoy a local natural area is a great way to foster an appreciation of nature.

Saline County SWCD staff gave a presentation in the 4 elementary schools to the fifth grade and the students each did a poster on what they learned. The top three posters were presented prizes at the District annual meeting.

The **Sangamon County SWCD** was awarded a 3 year grant. The objective of the Lake Springfield Watershed Project is to reduce the nitrate-N concentration in Lake Springfield to 50% below the IEPA's drinking water standard. The project is a collaborative effort of the District, Lincoln Land Community College, City Water Light Power and IL Council on Best Management Practices.

The **Sangamon County SWCD** was the recipient of an IEPA 319 grant. Through this grant, best management practices will be implemented throughout the Lake Springfield Watershed over a 2 1/2 year period.

The **Scott County SWCD** partnered with the U of I Extension and the IDNR fisheries biologist, sponsoring a pond workshop. Attendees learned about weed management, proper stocking, dry hydrants, and pond shocking, which manages and identifies fish population and species. The group asked many pertinent and relevant questions. The workshop was well attended.

Stark County SWCD holds an annual Land Improvement Contractor Seminar. We use the day to provide an educational program to contractors. In addition to reviewing conservation programs, billing issues, standard design questions, etc., we also have outside speakers present information on pertinent topics. Featured speakers were from NRCS, Ameren Illinois, and Leezer Insurance. The topics covered by the speakers were Illinois Archeology, Electrical Issues contractors need to be aware of and Contractors Liability and Equipment Insurance Coverage. Contractors were able to network with office staff and other contractors.

Stark County SWCD held a Conservation tour for students from Black Hawk East College soils class. Approximate 35 students attended the tour. The tour has been co-hosted by a local farmer and his wife along with the SWCD for almost 30 years. The students spent the morning learning about the Revised Soil Loss Equation, various conservation programs and practices, windbreak design, residue measurement, and other conservation topics. The group travelled to the field to view water and sediment control basins, waterways, block chutes, and filter strips.

Three Envirothon teams from the **Union County SWCD** participated in the LUC 5 competition.

The **Vermilion County SWCD** co-sponsored several Cover Crop Workshops. One field day (photo on next page) was held at the SWCD sponsored demonstration plot with 38 people attending. Several local producers addressed the group and their experiences with cover crops. The second event was a workshop held in Hoopeston. The workshop included notable speakers, Dan Towery, Troy Fehrenbacher (NRCS) and Dr. Shalamar Armstrong (Illinois State University). Also, seed specialists from ProHarvest Seeds spoke on herbicide termination of cover crops and specifics of a soil pit dug at the demo plot in September. 41 people were in attendance.

The **Vermilion County SWCD** completed a Natural Resources Inventory report for Apex Clean Energy, Inc. for the Hoopeston Wind Farm project. The review included the 54 turbine site review, transmission line route reviews and building facilities review.

Vermilion County SWCD partnered with **Champaign**, **Ford** and **Iroquois Co**unty SWCDs to host an on farm Cover Crop Applicator Expo (below) near Rantoul, Il. The "Seeds of East Central Illinois" event included two airplanes, several drills, a high-clearance seeder, herbicide spraying equipment, an aerial seeding demonstration and seed companies. Each company had a chance to speak to the group about their services and product lines. Many attendees had the opportunity to network with the companies and obtain services or products. The event was an opportunity for area farmers interested in cover crops to see different establishment techniques and learn about different seed mixes.

The **Wayne County SWCD** has started selling erosion control blankets to farmers and landowners. The blanket consists of a layer of straw between two woven nylon layers. The blanket is placed in the center of a grass waterway channel and prevents the scouring/erosion during grass establishment. It also serves as a mulch layer by holding moisture after rainfall and allowing the seeding to have a successful start. The blanket comes in rolls that are either 8 or 16 feet wide and they are 450 feet long. Over 21,000 feet of erosion blanket has been sold.

Winnebago County SWCD partnered with NRCS, Ag-Tech and Legacy Seeds to host a cover crop workshop. About 55 people attended the event. People in attendance learned about the different species of cover crops and where and when to place them; different application methods including aerial applications; how cover crops can increase soil fertility and soil health; and state and federal program available. Dave Robison was the keynote speaker for the event. An optional field tour to local cover crops sites concluded the event in the afternoon.

Winnebago County SWCD, along with Schmeling Construction Company, provided a rain barrel and talked to over 150 students about water conservation in honor of the Green Apple Day of Service. This annual event, established by the Center for Green Schools at the U.S. Green Building Council, gives parents, teachers, students, companies and local organizations the opportunity to transform all schools into healthy, safe and productive learning environmental through local service projects.

Winnebago, Boone, North Cook, DeKalb, Kane/DuPage, McHenry/Lake and Will/South Cook County SWCDs held the Northeastern IL Envirothon in April. Two competitions were held. A combined total of 42 teams competed with approximately 300 people overall in attendance for the two day event. The Envirothon is a competitive, problem-solving natural resource event for high school students intended to challenge the students about the environment. The objectives are threefold: (1) to test the environmental knowledge and understanding of high school students regarding natural resource issues: (2) to cultivate an interest within students to consider careers in environmental fields: (3) to teach students about team building and enhance their communications skills. At the completion of the year-long learning process, the Envirothon conducts a series of competitions where students are tested on five subjects: soil, aquatics, wildlife, forestry and a specific environmental issue, which changes from year to year.

The **Woodford County SWCD** assisted the local Farm Bureau in educating over 500 students about natural resource issues during their annual Ag Extravaganza day in May. All the 4th grade students in the county are invited to come and learn about many different aspects of farming and conservation, and get to participate in hands on learning activities to drive the message home.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The information in this report was complied by the Illinois Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Land and Water Resources along with our conservation partners highlighting the conservation accomplishments for 2014.

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Illinois Department of
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217/782-7454
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USDA - Natural Resources
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